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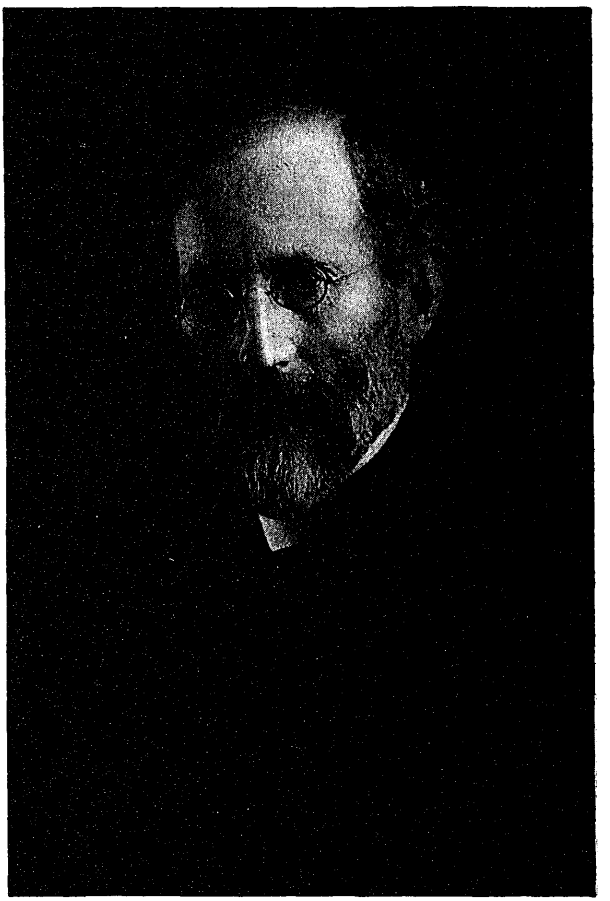
COURAGE, TRUTH, PURITY



Elliott and Fry

COURAGE, TRUTH, PURITY

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Archdeacon of Westminster

WITH A BRIEF MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR
By The most Rev. C. F. D'ARCY, D.D.
Archbishop of Armagh

BASIL BLACKWELL
OXFORD
1931

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PREFACE

THIS volume contains twenty-two Sermons, in some respects studies, but more practical in every respect than those I published in my last collection of sermons in 1929. In this volume, as in the last, the preacher has made truth his chief aim and the enforcement of truth in all its forms in practical life.

All the sermons were prepared for delivery in Westminster Abbey. Some of them have been preached elsewhere, in the Temple, and in University and Cathedral pulpits. Their object is to lead such as read or hear them to assimilate some of the truths they teach, so that according to the Master's words "by their fruits ye shall know them."

R.H.C.

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ROBERT HENRY CHARLES

A BRIEF MEMOIR

By CHARLES F. D'ARCY, D.D., F.B.A.
ARCHBISHOP OF ARMAGH

A BRIEF MEMOIR

ROBERT HENRY CHARLES was the fifth son of David Hughes Charles of Cookstown, Co. Tyrone, a medical man of high repute in Ulster, and notable among all who knew him for integrity of character and devotion to duty. Dr. Charles was the eleventh of twelve sons and carried on the strong and somewhat stern traditions of his race. Robert Henry was born in 1855. The Charles family had been long settled in Tyrone, seated at Moor Lodge in that county, and took their part in the desperate struggles and sacrifices by which the Ulster Protestants held their own against tremendous odds in the seventeenth century.

The effects of heredity can indeed be traced in the flock of which the subject of this brief memoir was a member, for it is true to say that most of the seven sons who were born to Dr. D. H. Charles and his wife became men of note in their generation. And many of the high qualities which they showed can be traced to their mother, as well as to their father. Annie Elizabeth Allen was a woman of strong character, deep religious convictions, and sound judgment. Her influence over her large family of strong-willed sons was one of the most potent of the forces which directed them in the ways which ultimately led them to lives of noble usefulness.

The beginnings of Robert's education were not promising. He was sent to a private school in the neighbourhood of his home where, as it turned out, the methods and attainments of the teachers were inadequate; and, at his own request, he was moved to the Belfast Academy. This school is the oldest in Belfast—nearly two hundred years old—and, at

the time when Robert Charles was sent to it, its Head was Reuben John Bryce, LL.D., uncle of Lord Bryce, historian and statesman. Thackeray visited this school about a hundred years ago and found it in a very flourishing condition. It had then about a hundred and fifty pupils, among whom was Hugh McCalmont Cairns, afterwards Earl Cairns, a great lawyer, who twice became Lord Chancellor of Great Britain.

At this school there was excellent teaching; and Robert soon discovered his deficiencies. But it was here that he first learned the joy of attainment, and, stimulated by competent instruction, he made up for lost time. Writing of this period of his life, he mentions two masters to whom he owed much gratitude: Mr. Mayben, from whose teaching he first gained an insight into the inner meanings of the two great Classical languages, and Mr. Maxwell from whom he first acquired the beginnings of a mastery of Latin prose, " It was customary for Mr. Maxwell to hand us an historical work—not a difficult one—and require us to translate it at sight into Latin, and this practice I sought to pursue in later years." So he wrote. What he wrote at the same time about his studies in mathematics is also worthy of quotation, " I must under no circumstances omit to mention one of the three or four greatest teachers whom I have known. His name was McNeill and he subsequently became head of Campbell College, Belfast." " In my earlier school-days I simply abhorred arithmetic. Such being my unhappy experience, I cannot express the delight I felt when, under Mr. McNeill's guidance, unrivalled in my opinion, I found that I was enthralled by his method of teaching mathematics." So successful was this method that Charles was able to present himself as a candidate for scholarships in both classics and mathematics. He obtained second place among the classical scholars

and only just missed the last place among the mathematical.

From School he passed, in 1874, into Queen's College, Belfast, and there, dropping the study of higher mathematics, and concentrating on classics he obtained the first of five scholarships, In Queen's College, three Professors were especially helpful to him: William Nesbitt, Professor of Latin, Cliffe Leslie, whose lectures on Political Economy introduced him to a new province of thought which attracted him so powerfully that he won the first place in the School of Economics; but most of all, he was influenced by Charles MacDouall, Professor of Greek. Of him, Charles wrote, " He was a grammarian of the first rank. His insight into and teaching on the minutest Greek particles and phrases I have never known rivalled. The bulk of my fellow students were probably bored by MacDouall's seeming subtleties. But I have not forgotten to the present day much that I learned at his feet. I have known only one other scholar whom I would place beside this now forgotten Greek linguist as an authority on questions of grammar and linguistic subtlety, and that scholar is Driver in his *Studies on the Hebrew Tenses.*" At the close of three years study, Charles took a First Class Gold Medal.

It was at some time during this period that a profound change took place in his outlook on life. He had been just a youthful student, keenly interested in the subjects that attracted him, able and ambitious of distinction, but uncertain as to the direction in which to seek the true aim of his life. His father had set before his sons the noble profession to which he had himself given all his powers. Four of them followed his guidance: all of these showed great ability and three ultimately gained very high standing in their profession. Naturally, the youthful Robert also for a time turned his thoughts to medicine. At other times, he thought of the Bar. But, while a

student at Queen's, there came to him a spiritual crisis. Conscience was awakened. It would seem that a deep sense of inward imperfection and need overwhelmed him. Then it was that, under the influence of his mother and also of the Rev. F. Crawford, Rector of the Parish, whose help he acknowledged with gratitude, he resolved to face his trouble with prayer and study. "Some weeks passed," he wrote "when on one Sunday afternoon while I was thus engaged, I suddenly heard as it were a voice bidding me arise and walk. The words were not these, nor were they articulate, but their effect was instantaneous. I became a stronger man in every way, spiritual, moral, and mental. It was after this great change in my life that I resolved to take Holy Orders."

In order to carry out this resolution, he determined to enter Trinity College, Dublin, so as to take advantage of the studies provided by its Divinity School. But he did not forsake his former studies, for he obtained a Foundation Scholarship in Classics and a gold medal in the same subject in Honours at his degree, as well as a number of other high distinctions.

The Divinity School of Trinity College was at this time at its very highest level of scholarly attainment and effectiveness. Its head was Dr. George Salmon, Regius Professor of Divinity, and famous all the world over as a pure mathematician. As a theologian and divine, he was notable for rare gifts of exposition and for critical acumen. Dr. William Lee, Archdeacon of Dublin, was Archbishop King's Professor, an office which gave him control of the junior class in the school. He also was a notable scholar, whose lectures formed a valuable introduction to the study of theology. Charles was able to take full advantage of the teaching thus afforded and obtained the highest distinctions which the school could give. He also enjoyed the confidence

of his fellow students, who elected him to the office of auditor of the Theological Society. This society consists of students who are either in the Divinity School or who intend to enter it. Under the presidency of the Regius Professor, it meets to discuss questions of theological interest, one of its members having been selected to sum up the discussions, and to see to the ordering of the debates. The member so selected is called the Auditor. The society still flourishes and the student chosen to be Auditor enjoys a position of special interest and importance in the Divinity School.

It was at this time that Charles began to be shaken with doubts as to some of the traditional forms of belief. Never sceptical about the doctrines which seemed to him truly essential to the creed of Christianity, he found difficulties in accepting certain elements which the church had inherited from mediæval times. The controversy raised by the preaching of Canon Farrer, as he then was, in Westminster Abbey, on the subject of "Eternal Hope," stirred him especially. Against the majority of those whose influence he felt in the surroundings in which he moved, he held with Farrer in opposition to tradition. Nor was he slow to express his convictions. When approached with a view to election as Auditor of the Theological Society, and when some doubt was evident as to whether a man whose views were so "broad" should be put forward, he boldly declared his position, and, to his astonishment, was unanimously elected. His frank acknowledgment of his belief and his courage disarmed all opposition.

It was about this time that the acquaintance between Robert Charles and the writer of this memoir began. The latter, having become a scholar of the House, had the privilege of sitting at "Commons" among men many of whom were older and more developed than himself. Among these was Charles with whom, up to this time, he had no association.

One night the talk turned on matters of fundamental moment, and, as often among the young, a tone of flippant and somewhat sceptical comment could be detected. Suddenly Charles said a few words, quite simple and with no tincture of superiority, but revealing a depth of conviction and sincerity which made instant appeal to head and heart. Next evening an opportunity came, and the writer found himself sitting beside the man whose words had touched him. It was the beginning of a friendship which endured.

When his years of study at the two Irish Universities were over, Charles joined two college friends in a long holiday in Germany and Switzerland. First they settled at Heidelberg, where he recruited his exhausted energies, enjoying leisure, and engaging in pleasant exercises, rowing, walking and tennis. The one study he allowed himself here was that of the German language. This he had been able to read, and so use it for purposes of study, but was unable to speak. But the chief incident of this time was his meeting with Miss Lilias Bence-Jones. Daily they met and the friendship ripened into the attachment which led him, a few years after, to seek her in marriage. It was a blessed and happy union which had no small influence in shaping the work of his life and bringing it to its fine completion. They were married in 1886.

In 1883 Charles was ordained in London by Bishop Jackson for a curacy in the parish of St. Mark's, Whitechapel. Though inducements were held out to him to take up work in the West End, he chose to go to Whitechapel, having a strong desire to get into the thick of the struggle against adverse forces. Here he worked for two years, and with marked success. He wrote, " In Whitechapel I was brought face to face with human beings of all kinds, the best and the worst. It was a haunt of evil-doers of every description. The Rector of another parish

was knocked down in our parish and robbed. It was said that after dark a policeman could not enter certain streets unless he had another constable as his companion. My experience was different. I visited every Christian house in a district of 5,000, which contained many Jews. Everywhere I met with kindness, although my visits were sometimes as late as eleven o'clock at night. As Junior Curate a Bible Class of girls was committed to my charge. There were forty of them, of whom six formed a Committee. Nearly all of the forty were of the salt of the earth, which speaks well for residents in Whitechapel."

When the time came for Charles to present himself for Priest's Orders, he had, in accordance with the custom then observed, to send in two of the sermons he had preached during his Diaconate. To one of these Bishop Jackson strongly objected. It dealt with the Atonement, and on this great question Charles had taken F. D. Maurice and Robertson of Brighton for his guides. He was called into the Bishop's study and questioned. As a result of the discussion the matter was referred to Bishop Walsham How, then Bishop Suffragan of Bedford; and How not only accepted the Sermon but also offered Charles work with his publishers. On this result, Charles wrote, "To the great honour of Bishop Jackson, he recalled me, and told me that he withdrew his objections, a difficult confession for an aged Bishop to a Deacon."

This sermon and the discussion that arose out of it led to further study which formed the basis of a volume, *Forgiveness and other Sermons*, published in 1887, in which was shaped a doctrine of forgiveness as "restoration to communion with God." According to this view, God's forgiveness is free to the true penitent, and requires no penalties, material or otherwise, thus forsaking definitely the doctrine of substitution, or the view that "Christ died in man's

place, bearing, in a sense, all man's sins, and that man accordingly enters into a new and perfect relation to God, as a sinless being." The book to its writer's surprise was well received. To many thoughtful minds it may, however, well seem that the view set forth in it can hardly be said to solve all the problems involved in a question so great and so profound as that of Atonement.

The work in Whitechapel proved, after two years of it, to be so severe that some change became necessary, and Charles spent a year as a curate at St. Philip's, Kensington. It was while here that he was married to Miss Lilias Bence-Jones, daughter of W. Bence-Jones of Lisselan, Co. Cork, about three and a half years after they had first met in Heidelberg. From St. Philip's he went to St. Mark's, Kennington, on the invitation of the Rector, who subsequently became Bishop of Tasmania, and was widely known later as Secretary to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, Bishop Montgomery. The work here was of a very difficult and exacting kind. The new curate was given a free hand in the unconsecrated Church in Montford Place. He began with a congregation of one man and twenty women and children. In addition to the regular services, there were two Sunday Schools. The elder boys, varying in age from sixteen to nineteen, were utterly undisciplined. They knocked down women in the street, stoned their teachers, and committed even worse offences. Strong measures were necessary. Notice was given that unruly boys would, in future, be dismissed, and not re-admitted until after three months and an apology. This brought things to a climax. Two sons of a leading parishioner behaved very badly and were dismissed. Their father was furious. But Charles was immovable. He refused to break the rule. Shortly after he had to call on the parents of another boy who had been dismissed. Expecting a rebuff, he was astonished at receiving

a hearty welcome from the mother of this boy. "Mr. Charles," she said "we have all been waiting to see if you would dismiss the great man's sons as you have done the others: my son will go back to school next Sunday and make an apology." The winning of this struggle brought him a welcome in nearly every house in the district.

One more incident of his work here should be recorded. Some of the more thoughtful men of the district told him of atheistic teaching in Kennington Park. Charles immediately formed a class and gave a course of instructions on historical criticism. The Bible, he showed them, was a record of the Divine education of men, from primitive conditions to its highest level in the New Testament. At the end of the course the members of the class were able to challenge the leading atheists to a debate, which was refused.

The expenditure of effort in all these labours began to affect his health so seriously that, in 1889, he and Mrs. Charles decided that a period of rest had become necessary. They determined to spend a year in Germany and settled in Weimar. After two months of quietness, health began to return and with eager interest Charles resumed his studies. For some time his thoughts had been turning to the religious beliefs that were already in existence before the rise of Christianity. He felt the need of a thorough investigation of the literature of Israel in the period between the Old and New Testaments. But for this a special equipment was necessary. For the attainment of this, prolonged and careful study was demanded. His knowledge in the field of Semitic learning was limited to an acquaintance with Hebrew. He therefore entered on a course of special study. As a result, he soon recognized the overwhelming importance of the Book of Enoch for his purpose. This led him to Dillmann's German edition of Enoch, which he studied thoroughly.

And the more he studied the more convinced he became of the importance of Enoch as furnishing a guide to Jewish thought from 200 to 60 B.C. Visiting other Universities he made acquaintances among some notable German Scholars, one of whom was Zahn.

From Weimar they moved to Dresden where his studies in Apocalyptic were continued and always in German editions. From Dresden Charles made frequent journeys to Leipsic where he found all the books of which he had immediate need. But, as his studies advanced, he became dissatisfied with German editions of Apocalyptic writings, and finally recognized the necessity of studying directly the texts on which they were based. He found that no two editors agreed on any single text as to date, unity or composition, or as regards real contribution to the development of Jewish thought in Apocalyptic. After further study the reason became obvious. Hardly more than two scholars had published editions of more than one text in this literature. In fact no scholar had a grip of this literature as a whole.

While they were in Dresden the first great epidemic of influenza swept across Europe from Russia. The severity of that outbreak has never been forgotten by those who had experience of it. Charles and his wife were both prostrated by successive attacks. Thus his studies were interrupted for a time. But when health returned, they were resumed with the old determination. From Dresden a move to Leipsic, the great centre of German publishing and bookselling, made possible the acquisition of valuable additions to the needful collection of works. Next, a visit to Berlin extended the circle of learned friends. Most important of all these was Dillmann, the Doyen of the Semitic school, whose works had proved so essential, and whose Ethiopic Version of Enoch, together with his Ethiopic grammar and Lexicon, Charles had studied with minute care.

On their return from Germany, Charles and his wife decided to settle at Oxford, and here they remained for many years. It was a happy choice, for at Oxford there sprang up a warm friendship with that great scholar, Dr. T. K. Cheyne. Study was, however, interrupted by constant acute headaches, arising probably from the effects of previous illness. A permanent cure most happily resulted from a suggestion made by Mrs. Charles. She recommended some manual activity and fixed upon wood-carving. Friends who visited their house in later years did not realise perhaps that the large and elaborately carved pieces of furniture in their drawing-room had contributed in no small degree to the accomplishment of the life-work of a great scholar.

Continued study had led Charles to recognize that, though Dillmann was the greatest Ethiopic scholar, whether of the past or of that time, his commentary on the Book of Enoch was not satisfactory, because his Ethiopic text was based on late and corrupt manuscripts. Also in not a few passages his renderings of the Ethiopic seemed incorrect. Incidentally Charles mentioned these opinions to Dr. Cheyne. To his astonishment this great scholar urged him to undertake an edition of Enoch for the Oxford Press. It had never come into his mind to enter the arena with Dillmann, who was not only the Doyen of the Semitic school in Berlin University, but also the foremost Ethiopic scholar, whether as compared with scholars of the past or of the present, and also the first authority on Apocalyptic then living or indeed that had ever lived. But the idea took hold and very soon Charles set to work, and in 1892 sent in his proposal to the Press.

The Delegates of the Press referred the matter to Professors Driver and Margoliouth. The latter rejected the proposal on the ground that Dillmann was a "faultless scholar." Charles then asked

Margoliouth to discuss the question in some detail by allowing him to compare Dillmann's Ethiopic text and his German translation in a dozen or more passages. The request was granted, and after two hours' discussion, Professor Margoliouth said that he had changed his mind and would support the proposal to the Press. The first edition appeared in 1893, but it was only a beginning. The translation was made from Dillmann's edition of the Ethiopic text, which was based on five late manuscripts. Not being satisfied with this text, Charles undertook the laborious task of revising it by a comparison with others to be found in existing manuscripts. Of these nine hitherto uncollated Ethiopic manuscripts were in the British Museum, and many other fragments had been discovered in Greek and other languages. Altogether twenty-three manuscripts and fragmentary versions were examined and compared before the text was finally determined. This was not soon completed: it was a work of many years.

In the book which resulted from these labours, Charles dealt with Dillmann's work with all the courtesy due to that great scholar's well-earned fame. It was a book that only that scholar himself could adequately review, and this he did in five columns of the *Theologische Litteraturzeitung*. In spite of expressed divergences of opinion the review was fair and on the whole favourable. But Dillmann recognized that his own work had become antiquated, and his second edition which was in preparation did not appear.

A result of this very thorough study was the demonstration that the Book of Enoch is the most important of all the Jewish Pseudepigrapha. It forms the most important link between Jewish and Christian thought on many questions. Hence the utmost care with regard to its text and its exposition was indispensable. No pains were spared to secure

a complete knowledge of the manuscripts. The twenty-three MSS. form the basis of the text, and, of these, one small and seemingly insignificant MS. in the British Museum, proved superior to all the rest. At last, in 1912, the Commentary appeared in a final shape, which was not so much a new edition of the book of 1903 as a new work. This book of 1912 Charles regarded as a vast advance on its predecessor, embracing as it does the improvements that twenty years spent on Apocalyptic and Biblical studies enabled him to make.

Dr. Cheyne's friendship and advice were a constant help to Charles, though the latter found himself compelled to part company with his friend on certain important questions. Those who can recall the critical discussions of that time will remember that Dr. Cheyne adopted some views of a striking and revolutionary kind in which he had few followers. Yet he was certainly one of the leading minds of the movement which gave to the Higher Criticism its established position in British scholarship.

The position of the higher critics was greatly strengthened by the adhesion of Dr. Sanday, a scholar of the widest attainments and of the greatest courage in the expression of his convictions, and of a character which attracted universal respect. His Bampton Lectures of 1893 on *Inspiration* had much to do with the newer way of regarding the manner in which the Divine and human elements are united in Holy Scripture and in the spiritual education of mankind. Charles imbibed these ideas and they became fundamental principles of all his critical work. He had indeed attended Dr. Sanday's Seminar for Oxford Dons from 1890–1895 and become an ardent believer in the new methods.

The great and very thorough work which Charles did in connexion with the Book of Enoch may perhaps be regarded as his most signal service to Biblical scholarship. But it does not stand alone.

Quite early in his long career of studies in the pseudepigraphic literature he published The Ethiopic Text of *The Book of Jubilees*, edited from four manuscripts; *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch; The Apocalypse of Baruch*, translated from the Syriac and edited; *The Assumption of Moses*. These appeared between 1893 and 1897. *The Ascension of Isaiah*, with the Ethiopic Greek and Latin texts, translated and edited, was published in 1900; in 1902 a translation of *The Book of Jubilees* from his own Ethiopic text, also edited; and in 1908, the Greek Versions of *The Testaments of the XII Patriarchs*, edited from nine manuscripts, together with the variants from the Armenian and Slavonic versions, and some Hebrew and Aramaic fragments. Also a translation of this last from his own text, with notes. In 1912, the Zadokite Fragments, translated from the Hebrew and edited. In 1913, appeared the Oxford Edition of the *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha* in two volumes. Charles was the general editor and also a contributor. In 1916 was published his translation of the *Chronicle of John of Nikiu* from the Ethiopic.

This immense labour of research, in a field which had remained until his time largely unexplored, gave Charles a unique position in the world of scholarship. It is not too much to say that, through his work, British learning was able, for perhaps the first time, to outstrip German. All the world over, Charles was recognized as the acknowledged Master in Apocalyptic.

In connexion with these great investigations must be mentioned his use of their results in order to illuminate the growth of eschatological ideas and beliefs. His conclusions are set forth in his *Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life in Israel, in Judaism and in Christianity*. This work contains the Jowett Lectures for 1898–99. The second edition revised and enlarged, was published in 1913.

It is of permanent value and importance for all students of its subject.

It was in 1913 that Charles was offered and accepted a Canonry of Westminster. At the time, worn out with his scholarly labours, he was, with Mrs. Charles, taking a holiday in Scotland, when, to his astonishment, a letter from the Prime Minister overtook him, making the offer. So completely had his mind been given to research that preferment in the Church had not entered his thoughts. He was not aware that there was a vacancy in the Chapter of the Abbey. The offer therefore took him by surprise: it also filled him with doubt. Earlier in his life he had found work in London too severe and had retired from it invalided. It was not until he had consulted his brother, Sir Havelock Charles, a physician of great eminence, that he accepted the Prime Minister's offer.

They settled in 4 Little Cloisters, a delightful old house, and very soon Canon Charles had to take his first month of "residence." This included regular preaching in the Abbey during the period. Accustomed to careful and accurate work, he prepared a course of sermons on a series of linked subjects closely related to the themes which had been occupying his mind for so many years. To the composition of these discourses he devoted the most anxious study. Great was his bewilderment when he found that he was gradually emptying the Abbey. The sermons were too difficult. They were addressed, like most of his writings, to the mind of the careful reader and not to the ear of the listener. From 1889 to 1913 his whole attention had been given to the most severe study. His works had been written for the student who would pore with anxious thought over every sentence, and he had become unfitted for a popular audience. Even the Abbey congregation found it impossible to follow the closely knit sequence of thought and argument. The new Canon

however was not dismayed. With characteristic determination he resolved to school himself to meet the new conditions which confronted him. And it is very interesting to know that the sermons which had thinned the congregations in the Abbey formed afterwards one of the most valuable and successful of his works. Published in the Home University Library under the title *Religious Development between the Old and the New Testaments*, they present a most impressive application to the history of Jewish and Christian thought, of the principles which had emerged in the course of his studies in Apocalyptic. No more illuminating book has appeared in this generation. It has had a great circulation, has been reprinted many times, and has been translated into other languages, including Chinese and Japanese.

It was after settling down in the Little Cloisters that Canon Charles devoted himself especially to the Canonical Apocalypse, commonly called the *Revelation of St. John the Divine*. His aim was to view it afresh in the light of his long studies, and to examine it fully. In carrying out this intention, he spared no pains to get as perfect a text as possible. He visited the Vatican where the Prefect of the Library, who later became Cardinal Ehrle, most kindly put all the desired manuscripts at his disposal. He also visited the Laurentian Library at Florence and finally St. Mark's at Venice. He collated the Uncials afresh from the photographs published by Kenyon and Lake respectively. He had twenty-two Cursives specially photographed, and called to his aid all the valuable versions in Latin, Syriac, Armenian and Ethiopic. The result of all these researches is to be found in his great Commentary in two volumes which was published in 1920.

From the many talks which the writer had with him at this time on the subject then engaging his thoughts, it was evident that the book had exerted

a great fascination upon his mind. He described it as a "glorification of martyrdom" and as a witness to the unshaken faith of the primitive church. Its central and most characteristic passage he found in the fourth and fifth chapters. There it will be seen that while the threatened company of Christian believers on earth was dreading extermination by the mighty and ruthless power of the Roman Empire, the seer was able to lift his eyes to heaven, behold the vision of the throne of God, hear the great ascriptions proclaiming His omnipotence and glory, and the new song of praise because the Lamb that was slain was revealed as the Lord of human destiny. On earth the blackest outlook, a threatening of death and destruction; in Heaven calm assurance and certainty.

In 1919 Canon Charles became Archdeacon of Westminster, a preferment which added to his official responsibilities but caused no interruption in his studies. The study of Apocalyptic had been, and still continued to be, the great work of his life, but it was not his only interest. His duties as a preacher he felt to be very important and he took them very seriously. Having realized, from his early experience in the Abbey, the need of adapting his way of expression to the ear as well as to the mind, he succeeded in a remarkable manner in becoming one of the most interesting of preachers. He gave much thought to questions of the day, and grappled, with unfailing courage and independence of mind, with problems of real difficulty. Thoughtful people crowded the Abbey to hear his careful examination of debatable questions and his usually decided conclusions. His clear utterance carried well through the great building, and his voice with its Ulster tone, and a pronunciation which had never lost something of the accent of Co. Tyrone, arrested attention. It must have often been the effect of these discourses to arouse dissent in the minds of some hearers, but

none could listen to them without deep attention and respect for the sincerity and intellectual ability of the preacher. In our time, a preacher is all the more interesting when he has something to say which is not the mere repetition of popular opinions. Sincere thought, knowledge, and reality of conviction are the most truly admirable qualities in a sermon. We do not expect to agree with all we hear, but we expect the preacher to arouse thought, to show real insight, and, if possible, to shed new light on the question with which he deals. This is especially true of sermons in churches which, like the Abbey, are centres to which flock congregations representative of the more intelligent and reflecting people of the age. For such congregations Charles was an admirable preacher.

Sometimes he took a large subject and made it the theme of a series of sermons. These were perhaps his most interesting discourses. They gave him wider scope, and opportunity to use his knowledge. He published *Sermons preached in Westminster Abbey, The Teaching of the New Testament on Divorce, The Adventure into the Unknown, Divorce and the Roman Doctrine of Nullity* and *The Resurrection of Man.* The last was published in 1929.

When sending the writer a copy of this volume, inscribed, as he put it, " to his old friend of half-a century," he wrote, " The enclosed book reached me only two hours ago. You will, possibly, not agree with all I say. But we are both seekers after the truth, and, as the work of such an one, you will accept it." He was right. If we realize that we are indeed seekers after truth, we shall not expect the minds of those we know and love, and in whose fellowship in thought we rejoice, to say everything as we ourselves would say it.

Through his long study of the whole Apocalyptic literature Archdeacon Charles had become the acknowledged Master in this subject. It might

seem that, with his Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John the Divine, his labours were ended. But one book of signal importance remained. The Book of Daniel is the great Apocalypse of the canonical Old Testament. Upon this book he brought to bear, as the final effort of his life-work, all his accumulated stores of special learning. His Commentary is indeed a great achievement.

It was the writer's good fortune to spend some time as a visitor in the house of his old friend when this master-piece was approaching completion, and to observe the concentrated attention which the great scholar gave to every detail. While working at his proofs, all his faculties were alert, his mind seemed to gather together the materials for each distinct part of the subject-matter, drawing freely upon the stores of a life-time, and also taking account of all that was newest in research and discovery. The historical value, for example, of the discoveries at Elephantine interested him especially. But if his attention were suddenly called away to some other subject, no matter how familiar, he would seem to be at a loss. It was as if his mind were called up out of some great depth where everything was in its place and ordered in relationship with all the contents of the vast store-house of specialized knowledge which he had made his own. When the Commentary appeared it was hailed with enthusiastic approval by those whose learning qualified them to form an opinion. Archdeacon Charles himself considered it the best of all his works, and also held that in it had come to light many things which he had not realized before.

Never had any scholar more of sincere enthusiasm and devotion in the service of knowledge and truth. It was this splendid spirit which carried him through all his labours of research and of criticism. During the greater part of his life he worked under difficulties which would have chilled the ardour of most men.

Near the close of his life he wrote, "I have not known, as far as I can remember, three consecutive good nights of sleep for forty-one years, and hardly one good night since 1915." Such conditions might well make regular study impossible. It took high courage as well as unflinching determination to pursue an aim involving so much severe labour and sustained thought through so many years, and all who reverence scholarship will rejoice at the completeness of his achievement.

Here may be recorded some of the recognitions which came to him in the course of his life, as his high attainments became more and more known. Beginning his studies at an Irish school and at two Irish Universities, he was incorporated a Master of Arts at Exeter College, Oxford, in 1891, and in 1910 became a Fellow of Merton, so gaining a high standing in that ancient University. A Doctor of Divinity of Dublin in 1898, the degree of D.Litt. was conferred upon him by Oxford in 1907, and in 1928 he received the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Divinity from the same University. Queen's University, Belfast, had made him a Doctor of Laws, *Honoris Causa*, in 1923. Few scholars of his period were selected for so many of those special Lectureships which are in themselves a mark of high distinction. He was Hibbert Lecturer at Oxford in 1898, Professor of Biblical Greek, Trinity College, Dublin, from 1898–1906, Grinfield Lecturer on the Septuagint, Oxford, 1905–1911, Speaker's Lecturer in Biblical Studies, Oxford, 1910–1914, Lecturer in Advanced Theology, London University, 1913, Warburton Lecturer in Lincoln's Inn Chapel from 1919, Schweich Lecturer, 1919–20.

In 1906, Charles was elected a Fellow of the British Academy. In that august and exclusive company he was soon recognized as a power. He threw himself into the administration of its affairs with zealous interest. As a member of the Council, and as, for a considerable time, Chairman of the

Sectional Committee dealing with Biblical criticism and Archaeology, and also a member of the Committee on Oriental Studies, he was in the thick of its activities.

Studies like those of Dr. Charles, involving the laborious acquisition of obscure and almost forgotten languages, and the minute examination of books which seem to-day to stand far apart from all modern interests, may seem to be little better than learned trifling. Why not permit these old documents and the tongues in which they are written to moulder unseen and unknown on the shelves of great libraries? The answer to that question will be found in Dr. Charles' book in the Home University Library, *Religious Development between the Old and the New Testaments*.

For the student of the Religious Development of mankind, no study of our time is more important than that which was introduced to the world by the researches of Dr. Charles. In the little book just mentioned, he sets forth this truth with perfect clearness. He shows how ideas which come into full light in the New Testament grew into distinctness in the preceding age. The careful student of the New Testament has often been puzzled by the gap which separates the conceptions dominant in the Old Testament from those which are presupposed in the New. The researches of Dr. Charles have filled this gap. The main subject here is eschatology, the doctrine of the last things. The eschatology of the prophets dealt with Israel as a nation. That of the apocalyptists dealt with the individual. Belief in a blessed Future Life, the expectation of a new Heaven and a new earth, the conception of the end of the present world as catastrophic, the idea of all history, whether human or cosmological, as a unity: all these took shape, the shape in which they entered into Christian thought, in Apocalyptic. "It was from the apocalyptic side of Judaism that

Christianity was born, and in that region of Palestine where apocalyptic and not legalism held its seat—even in Galilee, from whence, as we know, came our Lord and eleven of His disciples."

Starting from this beginning, Dr. Charles deals with the great Christian doctrines of The Kingdom of God, The Messiah as the Son of Man, the tremendous claims made for Him in the New Testament, the conception of a Blessed Future Life, Christian teaching as regards the forgiveness of the neighbour. He shows quite conclusively that, in relation to all these, the Apocalyptic literature reveals a development which was no small part of the preparation for our Lord's life and teaching.

Chapter VI on Reinterpretation is however the most valuable part of this very important little book. In the period covered by the study of Apocalyptic, "every conception was undergoing development or reinterpretation. Whole histories centre round such conceptions as soul, spirit, Sheol, Paradise, the Messianic Kingdom, the Messiah, the Resurrection." The "right of reinterpretation was exercised by every prophet, seer, and great teacher from the Exile onwards: it was naturally exercised in an un-paralleled degree by our Lord in dealing with the law, and in a very drastic fashion by St. Paul, and in some measure by every writer of the New Testament."

Dr. Charles applies this principle to religious thought in our day. Reinterpretation is continually going on. It must go on if the Christian Church is to live through the changing conditions of human experience. "Wisely and judiciously carried out" it is "a necessary precondition of a living and spiritual Church in the present." And out of this arises the need of Comprehensiveness.

"Here again," he writes, "we have an important lesson to learn from Judaism; for the Jewish Church prior to A.D. 70 could open its doors to all the

spiritually minded men of the nation." "Sadducee and Pharisee, Herodian and Essene, worshipped in the Temple, bound together, not by uniformity of intellectual belief, but by unity of spirit in the worship of the same God as revealed by Moses and the prophets." Inspired by these reflections, Dr. Charles sees a vision of a Christian Church in the modern world, equally comprehensive, realising at last the ideal set forth in the words, "The blessed company of all faithful people." This little book should be read even more widely than it has been. It contains teaching and suggestion of the utmost value for our age; and it is a signal proof of the fact that out of the study of even the more obscure phases of past history may flow fresh and invigorating thought for these latter times.

On January 30th of this year Robert Henry Charles passed away, in his seventy-seventh year. In spite of much suffering and bodily weakness from time to time throughout his life, he had been able to accomplish, with rare completeness, the task he had set before himself. He had unflagging interest in his work and unfailing determination. It was these great qualities that carried him through to the end. And, with a certain elasticity of physical vigour, he combined a mind which retained its power. Strong in spirit, firm in the convictions which he discerned to be central in the Christian Faith, holding that the liberty of prophesying is the right path to the attainment of truth, he must be counted a leader of note in spiritual things, as in learning, among the men of his generation.

COURAGE

"Be strong and of a good courage: fear not; nor be dismayed because of them." *Deut.* xxxi. 6.

THIS command occurs frequently in the Old Testament but not in the New Testament; for there it is always presupposed as the foundation of every Christian grace.

In this and later months of Residence I hope to deal with some of the virtues and graces that go to the formation of the Christian character. Of the virtues, courage, truth, justice, purity, and self-control are common alike to paganism and Christianity; but in Christianity they acquire a glory and a steadfastness that can only be exceptional in paganism.

In human character courage is the indispensable foundation of all the virtues and graces. The capacity for facing pain and danger is necessary in the perils which we share with the nobler and lower animals. But this courage is at its best only physical. If our aim is a high and ideal manhood, it must be transformed—transformed till it includes willingness to face hostile opinion, to confront the scorn, to disregard the censure, of those whom we cannot respect, and to face any danger, even death itself, which our faith in Christ may entail. But here we are touching on the higher phases of courage, such as moral courage, and the courage of faith. For the present we must confine our attention to physical courage, and observe wherein it helps to form character and wherein it fails.

The ancient Greeks—especially Plato and Aristotle—discussed the various kinds of courage. Plato (in his *Republic*) interpreted the four cardinal virtues that were recognised in his day—wisdom, courage, self-

control, and justice—but in so loose a fashion that they tend to overlap each other.

Aristotle dealt more logically with the subject, and distinguished at least six kinds of courage, five of which he implicitly treated as spurious. Thus firstly (*Nic. Ethics*, III, ch. ix), he refused to regard as courage the daring that faces danger in order to claim political fame or escape political degradation. Secondly, he refused to recognise in professional soldiers the true quality of courage, when this was merely the result of previous experience in familiar dangers; for he argued that when novel circumstances arose, they would be apt to lose the confidence won from such earlier and different experiences, and play the coward. Thirdly, he refused to recognise as courage the daring that springs from mere passion or pain, akin to that shown by the lower animals when provoked. Fourthly, he refused the name of courage to the intrepidity of an over-sanguine temperament, which is simply a disbelief in danger or an underrating of it; this is an unreal courage, which, because it has not the right motive, would, he inferred, be apt to vanish in the presence of an hitherto unexperienced danger. Fifthly, he refused to regard as courage the hardihood of mere ignorance which is the least worthy of all.

What then does Aristotle regard as courage? The essential element that a man of courage must possess, is, he states, the capacity for facing pain or danger, and facing it, not because the man likes danger, but because the purpose that leads him to face the danger is a noble one. Nobility of purpose, he insists, is indispensable to true courage. The courageous man will experience fear, but he will keep it in control. He will confront danger, either because to face danger is in itself noble, or for the sake of some noble object in view.[1]

[1] See W. D. Ross, *Aristotle*, p. 204. Aristotle apparently taught both views, but the latter most frequently.

But we have not yet arrived at Aristotle's own conception of courage, a conception that is all but incredibly limited in its outlook. He will not allow the quality of true courage to anyone but the man who deliberately *sacrifices his life in battle on behalf of his city or country*. Thus he denies this quality to sailors who face death in the attempt to save their fellow-men in the case of shipwreck, or to physicians who encounter deadly disease in the attempt to restore, if possible, their patients to a fresh spell of health.

This inadequate conception of courage, which no Christian thinker can accept, was not, however, the general conception of the ancient Greeks and Romans. But we must admit that the ethics of Christianity in this respect did not differ essentially from the best ethics of the pagan world. What Christianity did do, and it was a gigantic achievement, was to enable commonplace men and women to exhibit the splendour of a courage which pagan philosophers regarded as possible only for the highly-gifted few—a courage that in obedience to duty was ready to face even death.

Let us now turn from this limited treatment of the ancient Greek conception of courage to the modern conception of it.

What do we find praiseworthy, and what the contrary, in mere animal courage? It is not unusual to speak of it with contempt. And yet it possesses certain elements of good, and it is less rare than many suppose, a fact to which countless feats of ordinary men in war and shipwreck give indubitable evidence. Many men exhibit physical courage in special emergencies, and imperil their life for the sake of others without any personal end in view. So far as they do so, they seek something better than pleasure, of which at the moment they think not at all, and during the moment they reach the sphere of a true courage. But the men who are merely physic-

ally, and not morally, courageous cannot be trusted to make this their consistent aim. They are brave only by instinct or temperament, and their courage is generally little more than strength of nerve, or sheer physical delight in running risks. They are brave in battle from a reckless defiance of danger; they confront in public life the tides of popular opinion, not because they believe in noble or lost causes or forsaken truths, but because they delight in running counter to the masses. Such courage has some worth, but its moral value is slight.

This physical courage assumes a higher form when it is the offspring of discipline and *esprit de corps*. But if it attains no higher rank, it is after all a poor thing. Most cowards fight because public opinion imperatively requires them in certain emergencies to do so, or because they are sure of winning, but the man of courage is he, who, at the call of duty, will face any odds and still fight on when he is sure of losing.

Thus the courage that could go forth and encounter death with decency, as in the tournaments and duels of old, is after all no great affair; for death must be encountered at some time by all men. Hence, if our courage amounts to no more than this, it is a pitiful thing. It may not presuppose a single lofty quality, since it may co-exist with a life of impurity, injustice, dishonour, or sheer materialism: whereas the courage that commands our admiration is not the courage to die decently, but the courage to live truly, purely, manfully, at whatever cost, and to face odds however great.

Those who are merely physically courageous become, therefore, sooner or later, the bondsmen of innumerable fears, the bulk of which are generally imaginary. So long as they are subject to such fears, they can never be truly free men here or elsewhere; and their destiny is, as the Psalmist declares, to be "in fear where no fear is". For the

surmounting of such fears we must have not merely physical courage, but moral and spiritual courage.

Furthermore we should observe that there is a national courage which is not really moral courage, though often confounded with it. For it is generally characteristic of a nation to regard its nationality, as did the Jews of old, as an absolute good, and its opponents not only as its personal enemies, but also as the enemies of its God. But moral courage, or rather its higher phase of spiritual courage, is a virtue of a different type : it is an heroic quality of the soul, which shows itself proof against false shame or ridicule when it is called upon to uphold the right, and is ready to expend all its powers to the utmost in the defence of truth, purity, and justice.

This principle makes wars at times justifiable and inevitable. The personal ties of family life and the existence of the nation as a whole must be defended at all costs, even at the cost of life itself, if lofty moral principles are at stake. For the nation lives only so long as its sons are ready to die for it, and prefer its well-being to their own. But there is a larger moral unit than the nation, and that is humanity. To the well-being of humanity that of the family and of the nation must be subordinated, and the equitableness of their claims must be determined from this standpoint. Hence a victory can only be adjudged as of the highest moral value to the human race, when it works for the ultimate good both of the victors and of the vanquished.

The true spirit of moral courage has been expressed with the utmost brevity in the words " I can, because I ought." What is right must be possible, though its achievement lies still afar off. Herein moral courage differs from physical. Physical courage is a constitutional endowment : moral courage is an acquired virtue, and as such is, as a rule, accompanied by a growing strength of will. What you will steadfastly and continuously, that in

due course you will tend to become. What you are convinced is wrong, you will come sooner or later to shun without regard to the approval or disapproval of others, and the more faithfully you realise your moral ideal, the less will the dread of others affect you in fulfilling that which your conscience enjoins.

The *best victories*, as I have already said, are those which work for the ultimate good both of the victors and of the vanquished, and England can claim to have realised this high ideal in not a few crises of the world's history. Of such a nature, we may reasonably claim, was our victory over South Africa, who is now our faithful ally, though once our fiercest foe.

But let us return once more to the clear distinction that lies between physical and moral courage. Moral courage is not the outcome of temperamental and nervous energy, or of mere discipline or *esprit de corps* : it is the creation of a pure heart and a resolute will, and has often, even in pagan eras, lifted men and the gentlest and tenderest women above every calculation of self-regard and expediency, nay more, above all the burdens and fears of this mortal life.

Moral courage is naturally a less frequent possession than physical. For a hundred men who possess the physical courage to confront the dangers of disablement or death in battle, you could with difficulty find a score with the moral courage to maintain opinions that are unpopular in their class, or to denounce acts of the wrongness of which they themselves are convinced, but which pass muster among their comrades generally. To be true to the light wherever it leads, to shun base compliances with evil, to have the courage to do just what you ought to do, and not be dismayed by the presence of associates who would dissuade you from doing what you hold to be right, or ridicule you for doing it—this is rare indeed.

And here we may justly ask, what makes a man

the slave of those he despises? Nothing else but cowardice, however emphatically the man may disclaim the vice. Hence the need of the divine command "Be strong and of a good courage." It is often due to sheer cowardice that a man sinks into dissolute habits and foul vices, things which he loathes in the very moment he yields to them; he yields because he fears to encounter the sneers of associates whom, so far from in any way respecting, he despises in his inmost heart. Cowardice is the cause of more than half the meanness and baseness that weaken character, and make this life a despicable failure.

How then is a man to be made morally courageous? Hardly ever by making it a matter of demonstration to him that it is a foolish thing to be afraid, nor yet by convincing him that by despising men he will overcome his fear of them. Many men live in actual dread of the things and persons they most despise.

Moral courage, the idea of which we share with a minority of the noblest pagan teachers and heroes, must, if it is to uplift humanity at large, rise to a higher stage. Only by coming to know God through His Son and to serve Him from the heart shall we be lifted into that higher sphere, in which we shall be delivered from the fear of man and "walk," as the Psalmist of old said, "at liberty, because we keep God's commandments"—words which one of our great rulers in India realised in ample measure, of whom his associates declared that he feared men so little, because he feared his God so much. Seek God and live in communion with Him, and then you will be enabled to tread your cowardice under foot, and be free to go whithersoever God calls you in His service, and do your best and highest in fulfilling His will.

It is only when we attain to the courage of faith, a spiritual courage, that we attain to faith in its supreme reality—a faith that is often realised in its

divinest form, not in vanquishing our foes, but in refusing to regard them as foes; a spiritual faith that seeks to conquer by the steadfast endurance of wrong, and is victor over death itself, in whatever form the last enemy makes his inevitable onset.

It is true, indeed, that the perils of actual warfare are encountered by few of us, and that the agonies of martyrdom are undergone by none, save in such brutalised and vitiated countries as Russia; yet the need of the soldier's courage, and the need of the martyr's spirit, can never be dispensed with by the true disciple of Christ, wherever his lot is cast.

Such courage must find its source not in this or that specific doctrine, nor in the wholesale acceptance of a theological system, but in actual communion with the living God.

The man that possesses the courage of faith is in a true sense incapable of fear. Such courage does not remove his fear by lessening his expectation of physical ills, or by increasing his knowledge of means of withstanding them. Science at its best can only acquaint a man with that which is, whereas the courage of faith can look forward, and assure him of that which must be, and so free him from the tyrannies of passing evils, and introduce him more and more into the peace of God's own children. Thus, while his anticipations of the ills of life are the same as other men's, his fears are immeasurably less, empowered as he is to face the worst disasters of man's experience, whether they be the shattering of his highest achievements and still higher hopes, or the extremest physical sufferings, or the wildest deliriums of nature, and not to be dismayed thereby. In such a school God disciplines His hardiest soldiers, till they win a courage that can face the most dire evils that can befall our humanity and yet be undismayed thereby.

This courage of faith is within the reach of all.

The poorest and obscurest disciple of Christ can guide his steps by the same lofty motives as the most august and honoured. However oppressed with drudgery, however circumscribed his lot, he too can face life with a divine courage, and if he does so, then, for him as certainly as for the most glorious, the greatest promises shall be fulfilled in God's kingdom here and hereafter. This world's distinctions do not prevail beyond the border. Only goodness determines distinctions there. The lots of Dives and Lazarus are reversed, and the ground of their reversal is the presence or absence of the courage of a divine faith.

TRUTH

"If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth." *John* viii. 31, 32.

IN these words our Lord states what a man essentially requires for the attainment of membership in His kingdom, and this is the knowledge of the truth. "If ye abide in my word ye shall know the truth," and become citizens of Christ's own kingdom. The truth here designated is spiritual and ultimate. It is the perfection of this truth that makes its quest a permanent duty—nay more, calls down our reprobation on all contented acquiescence in the ignorance of any kind of truth within our reach.

If, indeed, there is no such relation as my text implies between abiding in Christ's word and the knowledge of the truth in its essential character, then indifference to the claims of truth can entail no moral responsibility, nor error in its quest any practical loss.

To be free in any province of practical human life, we must discover and obey the truths that regulate it. First, there are the laws or truths of nature. These teach us to achieve what is possible on the one hand, and not to attempt what is impossible on the other. They multiply indefinitely the material comforts of life: they free us from belief in magic, sorcery, and the superstitions that were prevalent in the Middle Ages. With such triumphs of science no age is more familiar than our own. But such conquests of nature impart no moral strength. They can give man a certain mastery in the physical world, though all the time they may be enthralling his moral and spiritual powers, and making him merely a citizen of this world, a mere serf of the material triumphs that he has achieved.

The truths which our Lord refers to are not the laws of nature, though the knowledge of these laws is invaluable in its right place, and constitutes a further revelation of God's world.

No more are we to identify the truth in our text with moral truths. Moral truths hold a far higher place than the truths of science, since they warn us against the encroachments of the lower and sensual elements in our nature, and teach us to cast off all fear but that of wrong-doing. Furthermore, they convince us that it boots little that the head bows to no foreign yoke, if, after all, the heart is the victim of vice, or ignorance, or fear, and that the most dangerous evils are not those that invade man's outward interests, but those that vitiate his character: they condemn that frequently accepted lie that statesmen and nations are not bound by the same morality as individuals: they make it manifest that, when licentiousness stains the lives of princes, or falsehood sways the policy of cabinets, they breed a moral pestilence in the nation at large, and teach the subject the same indifference to purity and truth that has the sanction of his ruler's example: they proclaim that the government that uses its powers selfishly, or sacrifices to its own ends the interests of the state, becomes an authoritative preacher of crime, and instructs the citizen to betray the public interest, and become venal when it suits his turn: they declare that a selfish policy to the stranger must encourage the growth of selfishness at home, and that bad passions aroused in a people's foreign relations will finally issue in internal and domestic strifes.

But it is not our intention to deal with moral truths in their general bearings. Rather let us limit our thoughts to truth considered in its lower character as veracity, and in its higher character as essential truthfulness. When strictly used there is a wide gulf between the two conceptions veracity and

truthfulness. Veracity implies nothing more than an agreement between our words and thoughts, though the thoughts may have no facts behind them; whereas essential truthfulness expresses a real correspondence between our thoughts and reality, a correspondence that is only partially possible in this life.

A man may be absolutely veracious when he gives utterance to his convictions of the moment, and yet be absolutely untrue, if his convictions do not correspond with the facts. The Pharisees were veracious. They believed Christ to be Beelzebub and said so, but therein they were aliens to the real kingdom of truth. In what appalling terms were these veracious persons—the Pharisees—denounced by our Lord: "Ye serpents, ye brood of vipers, ye sons of hell" (Matt. xxiii. 33, xii. 34, xxiii. 15). When a man utters a falsehood against another and yet himself believes it, he is veracious, but not truthful: or again, when he derives his theological views from mere tradition, without putting them to the test which St. Paul enjoins in the words "put all things to the test, hold fast that which is true," he cannot claim to be even a seeker after truth.

But a large minority of men cannot justify their claim to being even veracious. Unveracity assumes various phases. Thus it may take the form of exaggeration through carelessness or vanity, or that of equivocation, when the speaker's words are true but the impression he intends to convey is false: or it may take refuge in silence, just at the moment when veracity calls for open and honest expression: or it may resort to those insincere expressions with which it was customary in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to bring one's letters to a close —such as "your most obedient and humble servant," when the writer cherished not one jot of humility or obedience towards his correspondent. Such expressions are nothing more than the homage that vice or

insincerity pays to virtue. Such unveracities cannot be regarded as mere acts of courtesy. They are the refuges of the weakling and liar.

But there are occasions which require that our neighbours should not know our beliefs, feelings, and actions. If we or our friends have been guilty of some moral transgression which shame and honour alike urge us to conceal, we are not bound to confess our guilt, except to those who have the right to know the wrongdoing in question. But whether we confess or refuse to confess our guilt, it is our duty to see that all that we do confess is true so far as we know. But this was exactly the opposite of what Ananias and Sapphira did. These two persons professed that they had done all that they could do, though they were fully aware that they had not done so and that they were deliberate liars.

It is quite true that it requires more courage, more fidelity to conviction, and more strength of will to be veracious in all the emergencies and relations of life than to fulfil any other moral duty. I am not here speaking of absolute truths, spiritual and scientific, which for us mortals can only be ideals, and can never be fully attained by us in this life.

Is veracity or truthfulness, then, obligatory in all emergencies? Some moral philosophers deny any such obligation, and, although they admit that lying is always in some degree evil, maintain that in certain emergencies it is a lesser evil than the evils it is used to avert. Accordingly they ask: Is the brigand, or the madman, who is intent on killing a fellow man, to be helped to wreak his will by our disclosure of his victim's place of refuge? Or, again, must the physician shorten his patient's life by informing him that his ailment is a fatal one, or may he, by making little of his patient's ailment, perjure himself to the dying man in order to prolong his life for a few days, or weeks, or months? Are lies not to be told for the preservation of State

secrets, or secrets which one has promised to keep? If your friend is pressed with an unwarrantable question, can he not tell a guiltless lie? Such emergencies show how difficult it is to be veracious under all circumstances, but the difficulties in the main answer themselves. If a man adopts a calling which entails lying, such as that of a spy, he cannot expect to escape the guilt that attaches to a liar. If a physician is afraid to tell his patient the truth lest he should endanger his patient's life, it is, as a Scotch author declares, because he fears to put his trust in God's Providence. The man who discloses the place where the fugitive from a madman or a murderer has found refuge, is, if we recognise the real truth of the case, nothing better than the victim of his own cowardice. If it is rejoined that he endangers his own life when he refuses to give the would-be assassin the information he wants, this is quite true. Yet silence is surely the man's duty here—even at the greatest cost; for it is cowardice that makes him shirk the risk, and cowardice is the meanest of all the vices.

No gain can really compensate the wrongdoing wrought by the liar, and even if he could acquire some material advantage by the lie, that alone would constitute it a greater evil. Veracity, or if possible truthfulness, is, therefore, to be practised independently of results, and sought independently of any ulterior end.

An American poet puts the duty of man in words that are both vigorous and true:

"Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side—
Then it is the brave man chooses, while the coward stands aside,
Doubting in his abject spirit, till his Lord is crucified."

And yet a well-known Cambridge philosopher[1] declares that "it is obviously a most effective protection for legitimate secrets that it should be universally understood and expected that those who ask questions which they have no right to ask will have lies told them," and maintains that we should not "be restrained from pronouncing it lawful to meet deceit with deceit, by the fear of impairing the security which rogues now derive from the veracity of honest men." Even Martineau writes: "The theoretic reasons for certain limits to the rule of veracity are convincing and unanswerable, and compel me to defend anyone who acts in accordance with them." Yet he adds, "when I place myself in a like position, at one of the crises demanding a deliberate lie, an unutterable repugnance returns upon me, and makes the theory seem shameful," and he admits that, if he acted on such a theory, he could not "escape the stab of an instant compunction and the secret wound of a long humiliation." "How," he asks, "could I ever face the soul I had deceived, when perhaps our relations are reversed, and he meets my sins, not with self-protective repulse, but with winning love?"[2]

The vice of lying is marked with a treachery and a meanness which are all its own. For the gift of speech is based on the supposition that our words will express what we believe and what we feel, but the liar, taking advantage of this all but universal presupposition, secures for his falsehoods a confidence and trust which were otherwise beyond his reach. Hence the inevitable shame that befalls the liar when his guilt is brought to light. This has been a frequent theme in the past. Thus Bacon writes: "There is no vice that doth so cover a man with shame as to be found false and perfidious," and this holds true in a special degree when we lie for our

[1]Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, III, vii, p. 292, 2nd ed., quoted with approval by Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory*, II, 245.
[2]*Op. cit.*, II, 245 *seq.*

own advantage. "A lie," writes Kant, "annihilates the dignity of man," and Montaigne declares that "the liar is brave towards God, but a coward towards man." Thus lying springs in the main from cowardice, whereas veracity and truthfulness, that habit of character in accordance with which we both say and do what we actually believe, form the basis of all personal excellence.

We might add here that persons who are untrustworthy in matters of small moment can seldom be trusted in things of greater moment.

But it is urged that it may be difficult to be veracious or truthful in certain cases because we lack complete impartiality; to wish to discover the truth on one side rather than on the other is almost unavoidable. This, however, need entail no moral hurt, if our judgment refuses to be biased by our inclinations. In such circumstances we can attain to a high degree of impartiality, and avoid perverting the evidence at our disposal.

It has, however, been objected that an unbiased state of mind is unattainable. But, because perfect veracity or truthfulness is more difficult of attainment than any other human virtue, are we therefore to give a loose rein to untruthfulness? This question needs no answer.

The duty of veracity or truthfulness to our neighbour must not be treated apart from the duty of scientific enquiry, which includes the duty of revealing any truth we find. This latter duty is not always recognised. As the late Dean of Carlisle writes: "There is probably, in this country at least, too much . . . unwillingness to communicate to the ignorant and the young the results of Science or of scientific Theology, for fear they should weaken the reverence and the Morality which have in the past been associated with beliefs no longer tenable.[1] And yet," he acknowledges, this duty "has at

[1]Rashdall, *Theory of Good and Evil*, I, 196.

times to give way to others. . . . Some respect we all recognise it as right to show to the known convictions, the limitations, the prejudices of our hearers."

This concession opens up the large question of casuistry. Now casuistry is the science or art of solving difficult cases of duty and truth, and bringing them under the general rules of religion and morality. But too often people have resorted to, and still resort to, the casuist in order to evade, not to fulfil, obvious duties. That this was once the general conception, and the actual result, of this science we may see in Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (1831, p. 201),[1] where it is stated: "We talked of the casuistical question 'Whether it was allowable at any time to depart from truth.'" The late Dean of Carlisle traces the creation of casuistry in its worst forms to the Jesuits, whose confessed object was "to bring back to the Roman Church a Europe which had all but thrown off its yoke," and in this discussion he deliberately states that "the business of Jesuit moral theology was, not to help people to be as good as possible, but to show how they could be as bad as possible without suffering for it."[2] But let us turn from these perversions of truth, so general in casuistry, and ask, how are we to attain the truth designed for us by God? This truth cannot be accepted merely from tradition. The fact that our fathers found truth for themselves does not absolve their sons from the duty of seeking it for themselves: our fathers' findings only furnish a guarantee that their sons too shall find truth, if they truly seek it, and make it their own at whatever cost. Truth can never be static. It is a thing that grows from age to age in the school of God. If, therefore, we are children of the truth, and the truth

[1]Quoted in the New English Dictionary, III, 166.

[2]Rashdall, *Theory of Good and Evil*, II, 430-432. Rashdall writes in a note (p. 432), that "this system is secretly disliked by the more progressive Roman Catholic clergy."

is still to preserve our allegiance, our faith must be at once dynamic and progressive.

All ages of progress are marked by a progressive revelation of truth. It is only to the *intellectually dead* that the creed of the present is the mere reproduction of the creed of the past. Such a creed is in its essence an obedience without knowledge and spiritual growth. Hence such as profess it fear to study its tenets, lest they should make shipwreck of whatever faith they possess, and shun thought and research, lest they should lose whatever religious convictions or prejudices they may chance to have.

One of our foremost scientists, Dr. Whitehead, in whom the life of research and the life of religion are not at strife, has well said that " religions commit suicide when they find their inspirations in their dogmas. The inspiration of religion lies in the history of religion," that is, in the lives of the faithful. " The sources of religious belief," he continues, " are always growing, though some supreme expressions may lie in the past. Records of these sources are not formulae. They elicit in us an intuitive response which pierces beyond dogma.

" But dogmatic expression is necessary. For whatever has objective validity is capable of partial expression in terms of abstract concepts. . . . But the dogmas, however true, are only bits of the truth, expressed in terms which in some ways are over-assertive and in others lose the essence of truth. . . . The real practical problems of religion have never been adequately studied in the only way in which such problems *can* be studied, namely, in the school of experience."[1]

Dr. Whitehead closes this passage with the terrible but true statement that when dogmas are static and unprogressive, idolatry is inevitable.

In conclusion, then, the true man is he who bows to no authority save the God who witnesses within

[1] *Religion in the Making*, pp. 144-147.

him ; whose mind is open to all light whencesoever it may come ; whose creed rests not on mere tradition, but on the strength of personal conviction ; till at last he attains, so far as possible in this world, truth in word, truth in deed, and truth in oneness with God in Christ, and so finally, in the power of the divine life, he overcomes the bondage of the senses, the world, and self, loves goodness and God for their own sake, and becomes in very deed a true disciple of Christ.

PURITY

" To the pure all things are pure." *Titus* i. 15.

ARE these words of Titus " To the pure all things are pure " true ? Yes, they are assuredly true in the most real sense : for purity makes the things of the world pure : the pure in heart purify those who come within their influence, if they are capable of becoming pure ; for even vicious men are made purer by it—for the time, if not for perpetuity.

Now in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds impurity, that is, impurity of the flesh, was all but universal, and although many later races are purer than those ancient races, yet impurity in the present day is too general to be ignored. Hence it must seem strange that sermons so often confine themselves to mere opinions or dogmas, while the actual religious and moral difficulties of life, its worst temptations, its sins of the flesh, are only vaguely referred to, if referred to at all, and young men and maidens are left without a warning word to save them from the coarsest sins of impurity. There is no escaping these : you must be their master, or you shall become their slave.

What deliverance can be found for those who are struggling with the sins of the flesh and those of life in general? Many are offered—several by the world, one by God. One section of the world says : Give a man a perfect heredity and perfect surroundings, and you will have a perfect man. So the socialists would have us believe, who teach that all moral evils and many other evils have their origin solely in external customs and laws that are unjust. But Christianity rejects this idea wholly. It traces impurity not to outward circumstances but to our-

selves. The Kingdom of God is from within. Men and women create their own worlds—be it vicious or be it good.

To the pure all things are pure, but many go through life denouncing it as the source of all deceit, dishonesty, treachery, ingratitude, impurity and selfishness. They attribute to others the vices which are implicit or paramount in their own lives. But experience tells a different tale: it declares that each man is quickest to detect in others the vice that has gained the upper hand in his own life. The wrong lies in the heart of the thinker, not in the things about him. But if that which is really wrong seems pure to him, the wrong thing, in this case impurity, has become a ruling passion in his heart.

When a man allows his tastes to be defiled and his passions roused by sensual, licentious, and debauched scenes, novels, or plays, then he sees human nature and human society as hopelessly corrupt. But this world, as the sensualist sees it, is not God's world. Christianity rejects his perversions, and traces the evil to our own hearts and lives.

Again, men have sought to purify the world by Philosophy and Morality. Now there never were greater schools of Philosophy than those of the Greeks, and yet the Greeks were guilty of innumerable sins and lusts. Art is just as powerless as Philosophy to cleanse the impurities of the world, and Law as powerless as Art. Ancient Rome became the helpless victim of her own profligacy—a profligacy that nothing could withstand. Other nations in succeeding centuries have become the victims of their own sins, and if England yields to its own passions of selfishness and sensuality, it cannot escape the doom that has befallen the less reprehensible nations of the past. Its fall will be the result of the impurities denounced by the apostle in our text, due to the unbelief of its younger generations in God.

Belief in Christ alone can confront and master the sins of the flesh, and never does the soul appear so great as when it meets its temptations and overcomes them.

Hitherto we have dealt with purity, and not been careful to distinguish it from innocence. But purity and innocence are really worlds asunder. Before the conscience has grasped the idea of a better and a worse, no real sin can be committed, no true self-reproach incurred, and no consciousness of transgression and penalty. Purity is essentially superior to innocence; for purity can only be won by conflict and victory over evil. Without a knowledge of right and wrong, there can be no spiritual progress. Intellectual progress there may be, but intellectual progress cannot overcome the lewdness and baseness of the world.

St. Paul recalls the period of his own innocence—the period when there was no transgression because there was no law. He writes: "I was alive apart from the law once" (Rom. vii. 9). But he can say so no longer. His conscience is awakened and thereupon follow the long years of conscious shortcoming, spiritual strife, and conflict.

But even the imperfectly achieved purity of riper years has an element of divineness in it that cannot belong to the untried innocence of our childhood's hours. And if the seeker after purity is constant to his ideal, he will without fail achieve it, if not here, then hereafter, gifted, as he will be, with a wisdom that knows the evil and chooses the good; and so he will be able to see God and to serve Him with his whole heart, when he passes from this world to one of the millions of worlds of God's creation.

We have already referred to the utter incompetence of this world's wisdom, art, or politics, to save the individual or the world at large, and also distinguished between purity and mere innocence which is practically ignorance of evil, and dwelt on the fact

that belief, and life, in Christ alone can save. Even an Old Testament prophet foreshadowed this great truth: "Come," he writes, speaking in the name of God, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

And in the New Testament the same truth is put more briefly in the words: "Bring every thought into captivity to the love of Christ."

But there are, according to the ascetics, many things which must be forsaken if we would win our souls. The seeker after God must, the ascetics urge, forsake business, trade, politics, art, music, literature, though these constitute absolutely necessary parts of man's life. But since God has made these necessary parts of our life, they cannot be regarded as common or unclean, since they are God's own ordination, nor can they be forsaken or treated as secular. For a man to do so, is to do so at his peril. It is only owing to his unfaithfulness that he distinguishes things sacred from things secular. In God's world there is no such distinction as sacred and secular. The Christianity that does not hallow all our life, material, social, economic, political, not, of course, to say religious, is not true Christianity; for it has already surrendered its territory to the enemy, and abandoned the very field of spiritual warfare that God had entrusted to it to make its own.

Here the remedy is not to flee from God's world, and to have as little as possible to do with it. This is an utter falsification of the teaching of Christ. Christ commands His disciples to abide in the world and save it, and to make men more than conquerors over its temptations; He does not teach them to be poltroons and cowards, and to shirk the hard duties that are assigned them in the world. And, assuredly, never does the soul so truly show its real greatness as when, following its Divine Master, it goes forward,

clinging fast to the purity it reveres, despising the world's contempt and temptations, and refusing to yield to any wrong or passion that would separate it from God.

Such a soul, which cannot be turned from its high service by the allurements of the evil one, the seductions of the flesh, or the viciousness of its surroundings, nor terrified by the spiritual or material pains or torments it must confront in the tasks God has set it, affords a spectacle of heroism, nobleness, and divine purity which you can never find in *any Eden of untempted innocence.*

Notwithstanding, there are men and women who fear the world, either from constitutional weakness or wrong conceptions of divine duty. Such persons naturally find their refuge in flight from the world. Hence arises asceticism, to which we have already referred, the aim of which ascetism is not to enable men to perform the tasks which God Himself has assigned them, but to escape from them. But it is not by forsaking the world that men can make true purity of soul their own. This was the error that drove men and women into monasteries and nunneries, into remote deserts and caves, and taught that celibacy was purer than the life that God Himself had appointed for them.

But you can go anywhere, my brethren, if you are assured that your Lord is with you. There are, it is true, weak, diseased, spiritual constitutions that can hardly bear the slightest contact with evil without suffering infection. But this is because they are constitutionally diseased, or because they have enfeebled their powers of resistance, either through actual sin, or through surrendering their imagination to thoughts of depravity and vice. It is otherwise with the pure and healthy spiritual-minded man. For he can fling back the distemper, while his purity and spiritual energy are only strengthened by his conflict with evil.

As for the souls that flee from the world, they are supposed to be especially pure and uncorrupt, or in the way to become so. But herein the Mediæval Church in common with paganism was teaching a doctrine in direct conflict with our Lord's great prayer in John xvii. 15, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one." Here for His disciples, as for Himself, conflict was the condition of victory. He prayed that they might be strengthened to overcome the enemy, and not for their withdrawal from the scene of conflict. This asceticism, which was the perversion of God's will, led to its natural nemesis.

During the Middle Ages it shut up men and women in monasteries and nunneries. In many cases the celibates were faithful, and helpful to the weak, sick, and despairing; but, since too often their sole task was to save their own souls, their duties too often ceased to be divine, and monasteries and nunneries sometimes became abodes of impurity, whose inmates were abandoned to their own lusts and passions, without the only help that could save them, the help of the Divine Spirit.

But this is not the way to cleanse the heart of man. The evil-hearted man is constantly finding evidence of evil where the pure heart can see none, finding insincerity in the most guiltless, and selfishness in the most disinterested; whereas the pure in heart are quick to discern purity, kindness, truth, generosity, and goodness, or possibilities of them —even in the unworthy. It is not blindness to evil that characterises the pure in heart, nay, rather it is the power to see through the evil and discern the good beyond it. For the goodness of the pure in heart is a mightier thing than evil; it can see through the evil to the underlying good; it is often capable of eliciting the good and making it the ruling power in man. It is not the mere

ignoring, or the mere ignorance, of evil that makes all things pure to the pure, but a divine power which goes with such purity, and recognises hidden spiritual powers, which, if called forth, are able to overcome the evil that hides them. There are none so ignorant of human nature as those who can see nothing in man but his imperfections.

And yet there are large numbers of men and women in whom certain memories or incidents in their lives and callings beget evil and suggestive thoughts. For such victims of sin there is only one means of escape, and that is to avoid such evil surroundings. No other means of escape is possible. Having desecrated their lives with base thoughts or deeds, however deeply they repent, they must withdraw from what are to others innocent pleasures or pursuits, till at last their minds and consciences are cleansed from the foulness that pollutes them.

But for such men to build a creed on their own evil experience and make it binding on all others is an infamous injustice, a libelling of God's world with the lewdness and corruption, wherewith they have stained their own hearts.

For many of us, perhaps for all of us, it is necessary to renounce certain indulgences, though wholly innocent in themselves, in order to gain the moral and spiritual self-mastery that Christ would have us attain, so that the evils of the world may not overcome, even if they overtake us unawares. Yet here again we must be careful not to make binding on others the rules we have found necessary for ourselves.

Now in this congregation there are numbers of young people. To these I would make a special appeal. Would you be pure? Dread of the consequences of sin will be wholly unavailing to make or keep you so. It will only make you more prudent in your sin, and therefore more detestable. There is only one sure protection—trust in God as

the most real and profoundest Force in human life, and not any mere article in your creed. Then conscience can speak with authority. Avoid the beginnings of sin. Let no evil suggestions of coarseminded companions tamper with your purity. Through the power of the Holy Spirit you can be more than conquerors in your temptations, and become the masters of your passions. Avoid, I repeat, the beginnings of sin. But, if you have sinned herein, the Master calls upon you to repent, and, if you repent, God will receive back His repentant child. But do not postpone the day of repentance. The time will come, when, with weakened will, you may seek a place of repentance, and be unable to find it, even though you seek it earnestly with tears: you will then be the reluctant, self-loathing victims of your past, carrying in your breast a conscience from which you cannot escape, and, at the same time, unable to see purity in the purest and best around you.

Many men and women come to think their own peculiar sins unescapable and inevitable. But no sins are inevitable. Religion will not have it so. The law of God is absolutely intolerant herein. It starts with the demand for that purity which man declares to be impossible, and insists that, sooner or later, a day of reckoning will come, and the sinner will not be released till he has paid the uttermost farthing. Do not let any perverted form of religion make the word of God vain through human traditions by condemning some sins and condoning others.

Never be content with morality. Morality is so often negative. But true religion is from its very nature positive. It is a delusion to long again for your early youth with its innocence of evil: for manhood, when it has even in part won its fight through the power of Christ, is better than boyhood at its best, and an honourable old age is better than

noblest youth. For the aged, if they have sought to be faithful to the Master, despite repeated failures and shortcomings, have shown that they are true and hardy soldiers of Jesus Christ on many a stricken field of battle. In religion alone, and not in any worldly wisdom, you can find the help you need to overcome the sins that so easily beset you, whether the sins be sins of impurity or dishonesty, sins of low desires, debased motives, or wicked passions. Like the Prodigal in the parable, return to your Heavenly Father, and He will welcome His repentant child; for it is God's chief purpose to save unto the uttermost all who return to Him through Christ.

In conclusion, my brethren, is your religion urging you to cry unto God: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me? If your religion is real, then God will create a new heart within you, and God will renew a right spirit within you.

FAITH AND LOVE THE CONQUERORS OF FEAR AND COWARDICE

" In God have I put my trust: therefore I cannot fear." *Ps.* lvi. 4.
" Perfect love casteth out fear." 1 *John* iv. 18.

THE influence of fear is universal. It exercises its sway in some measure over all our actions, whether these have to do with things material, moral, or spiritual. It was undoubtedly implanted in us as a means for our protection, but, unless kept firmly within its legitimate and narrow bounds, it always tends to overleap them, and so to counteract the very ends for which it was designed and to extinguish in man even the desire for life itself. Savage life is full of fear, and superstition and cowardice are the natural accompaniments of fear. The men that are fearful and cowardly are all their lives subject to bondage.

The most obvious needs of man as he confronts the endless fears that beset human life are fortitude and courage. Fortitude is the passive side of courage: it is the power of endurance in the face of danger, hardship, or suffering. Courage on the other hand, whether physical or moral or both combined, is that quality of mind which actively encounters perils and strives to overcome them.

But before we consider courage further, we should observe the ills and disasters that are due to the lack of courage, that is, to cowardice. Cowardice is the source of half the evils that render the building up of character impossible. The coward is in greater or lesser measure always a failure; for his life is

blemished by outward base compliances, which he must in his heart despise, unless he has lost all his manhood. Thus, to keep the goodwill of frivolous associates, he listens in silence to the base innuendo or to the still viler calumny. He gives way to coarse forms of speech, or degrading acts of intemperance or impurity—and all this he does because he lacks the courage to stand up against what is customary in the society he frequents, and fears to face the criticism of those he cannot do otherwise than regard with contempt and scorn. And yet all his sacrifices to their low moral standards give him no rest, if he still retains any sentiment or ideal that transcends the conventional tone of his mediocre or disreputable associates. Out at elbows, alike in physical and moral courage, he is one of the most pitiable creatures on God's earth.

Courage of some kind, therefore, is an indispensable quality of the human mind, if the life it fashions is, even in a minor degree, to be true and equitable.

As we have already noted, there are two forms of courage, physical courage and moral courage. Now, though we must assign a value to moral courage infinitely transcending that of physical courage, we should not on that ground dismiss physical courage as undeserving of admiration. For there is generally in it some measure of unselfishness: its aim is not always immediate gain, or praise, or pleasure, but often something higher. Yet, unless it comes to be transformed and quickened to higher issues, it can never attain to the heights of moral courage, which is an essential element in all real goodness.

Physical courage often exhibits, as we have observed, some elements of unselfishness, and, so far as this is true, it is worthy of the high place assigned to it in the ancient ethical systems of the Greeks. But the possession of mere physical courage is no guarantee of goodness. In fact, a man may possess physical courage and yet be a worthless or

even a vicious character. In this case physical courage is derived from one or more of a variety of causes. It may be constitutional and due purely to one's temperament; or to mere insensibility to danger, or to inexperience and ignorance of the perils involved, or to the knowledge that the danger after all is not real; or it may have its origin in the consciousness of being ranged on the side of the big battalions, in the conviction of being on the winning side; or in the contagion of a passing enthusiasm, or in some instinctive impulse, which makes even the most sensitive and timid men and animals forget themselves and face any odds in defence of their young or those dependent on them. In this last case the consciousness of danger is inhibited by the instinct or passion that is in control for the moment. In most of these cases, including the last, physical courage owes its existence to a mere insensibility of the nerves, or to the temporary concentration of the attention on one group of facts to the exclusion of all other groups that are antagonistic to it.

But most of these phases of courage are not true courage, though they can render it yeoman's service.

First of all, they may be effective, but it is generally only for the moment; for when the strong impulse that turns the timid into a fearless being dies away, all the terrors of traditional fear resume their sway. Secondly, such courage, even when it is constitutional, is limited in its range of action, and can be depended on, as a rule, only within the sphere of such experience as it is familiar with. When those possessed of such physical courage are confronted with the mysterious and the unknown—unknown within the bounds of discipline, *esprit de corps*, or experience—fear reasserts its sway, and they are no braver than their fellows.

Under any one of these contingencies a man may even sacrifice his life, and yet his courage may be of the lowest order. As Thomas Carlyle writes, "the

courage that can go forth and have itself shot and snuffed out with decency . . . we esteem an exceedingly small matter; capable of co-existing with a life full of falsehood, feebleness, poltroonery and despicability. . . . The courage that dares only die is on the whole no sublime affair; necessary, indeed, yet universal; pitiful when it begins to parade itself. . . . The courage we desire and prize is not the courage to die decently, but to live manfully. This, when by God's grace it has been given, lies deep in the soul; (it) . . . fosters all other virtues and gifts; without it they could not live."

With these words we pass naturally from the consideration of mere physical courage, even in its highest phase, to that of moral courage. But, in contrast with physical courage, we may observe that moral courage is not dependent on an environment that it knows: it is not a thing of mere heredity, or of temperament, or of nervous insensibility: it is not a product of discipline and *esprit de corps*: it is a virtue and a dynamic virtue. Hence it is a virtue that persists, so far as it is true to itself, under all circumstances known or unknown, and presents itself as ready to confront all hazards, and to carry on the fight, even when it is conscious that the battle is already lost.

Moreover, this virtue is not only dynamic, it is also, by reason of its own essence, an ever-growing force. For if we ourselves are growing to be better persons morally, our moral standards must also be growing, and, as they grow, their claim on our obedience must become ever larger and more exacting. Thus the range of our dangers and of our fears must be ever widening, and enjoining ever harder duties, as our higher nature develops. For it is this higher nature that creates incomparably the greater number of the dangers we apprehend, though these dangers are also faith's opportunities. The lower animals are free from most of these fears. It is the proud but solemn

prerogative of our higher nature to forecast and encounter ills that are hidden from the natures beneath it. For every enlargement of our personality brings with it new possibilities and desires, and every desire the possibility of fresh conquests and attainments and also of fresh disappointments and disillusions.

It is true, indeed, that half of our anxieties are due to the fear of evils that never materialise, and have no reality save in morbid imaginations. Men are thus frequently the victims of evils that are purely of their own creation. As the Psalmist writes: "there were they in great fear where no fear was." Notwithstanding, the fear of evil, whether real or imaginary, is in itself a fact, and as such it tends to paralyse the will, to debase the affections, and to enslave the mind. Hence, unless we can summon to our help powers that can deliver us from this thraldom, we must all our lives be subject to bondage.

But this is not all. When our moral courage in the face of real or imaginary evil shrinks from the strife, and we give up the attempt to achieve our highest, we come inevitably to a compromise between what our moral ideals demand and what it seems to be safe or expedient to do. The aim of such a compromise is generally our immediate safety or escape from difficulty; but the result of such a compromise is ultimate and inexorable loss; its unfailing wage is the sorrow and degradation of a soul that has known something of what God requires from it, and yet has disowned His claims and made the great refusal.

Hence moral courage, in and by itself, is seldom equal to the claims of the moral life, and accordingly the lives of the majority of men, at all events as they advance in years, are darkened with discontent, with fears, and superstitions. Moral courage must, therefore, be reinforced by something greater than itself.

For this reinforcement of moral courage it is in

vain to look to science. Science, indeed, has from time to time made the proud claim that it can dissipate the fears that beset the ways of men, and lead them into a new kingdom of comfort and quietness and peace. But with deeper knowledge science has become more modest: for though it is true that it has dispersed multitudes of the groundless terrors that vexed our forefathers, yet it has brought to light fresh terrors in their stead. Though it has exposed many superstitions of the dark ages and laid bare the falsity of the religious and secular magic of the past and present, yet in their stead it has introduced legions of new alarms that beset our life from the cradle to the grave. In fact, it has changed the character of the fears that encompass human life, but multiplied their number beyond count. If it has overcome many of our ills, it has increased indefinitely our knowledge of still greater ills that menace humanity. It has discovered countless enemies that infect the air we breathe and the food we eat, and kindled the apprehension of others still more deadly. The remotest corner of the earth will soon be no longer safe when the engines of war can rain down destruction on myriads of helpless humanity But if a man has a living faith in God, and just so far as he has a living faith, he becomes incapable of fear. He asks no pledges from God in return for his service, nor does he sell his trust and worship for a consideration. His aim is, first and above all, to do God's will—the most blessed thing in all the world—and, whilst engaged in fulfilling the tasks God has committed to him, he is delivered in ever larger measure from the anxieties of life; for he knows that, if he makes it his first or supreme aim to do God's will, God will undertake all his anxieties and all the secondary issues of his life. This truth that faith in God brings with it deliverance from fear has been known through the most intimate personal experience to faithful men in all ages and in all lands.

But this deliverance is not wrought by the exemption of the faithful from trial and disappointment, nor by lessening their expectations of the evils incident to human life. Such men do not look for a life fenced from spiritual and other evils, nor secluded from spiritual and other dangers, but for a spirit that shall transcend the very fear of such, and enable them, if God so orders it, to confront all evils and bid them do their worst.

To the man of faith it is an incontrovertible truth that faith tends more and more to make him incapable of fear. But, as we have already urged, it does not do this by endowing its possessor with immunity from physical and moral ills. To be protected from the arrow that flieth by day, or from the pestilence that walketh in darkness; to be unharmed when thousands fall by his side and tens of thousands at his right hand; to be safeguarded against spiritual trial and the powers of wickedness in high places—all this he would deem it shameful to desire, as both treasonable to the brethren whose lot he shares, and as betraying distrust in his heavenly Father, without Whose knowledge not even a sparrow falleth to the ground, and in Whose eyes even the weakest soul more than outweighs in worth an entire physical world.

Furthermore, faith delivers man from fear—not only in physical and spiritual worlds, but also in intellectual. When science and research oblige a man to part with certain elements of traditional belief, trust in the heavenly Father Who is leading him fills him with the quiet of the Divine Presence, and endows him with the power and resolution to adopt the larger truths opening on his vision without regard to immediate self-interest, immemorial tradition, the disapprobation of friends, or the hostility of enemies. And so, abandoning the intellectual positions of the past that are discredited by the new truths, he proceeds to reconstruct his beliefs in harmony with the

fresh light vouchsafed him by God's Spirit. Such is the task of every true reformer and seeker after truth. The fear of God delivers him from the fear of man and all lesser fears, and for him the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, the stay and strength of his often faltering steps as he advances in the acquisition of eternal truth.

Not without pain and grief and many an inward agony do the faithful take such new departures. But, having seen the heavenly vision, they dare not be disobedient thereunto. And so they count the cost, they measure the hazards, and then they proceed upon their way, contented to leave the issue in God's hands. Compromise in the field of intellectual truth, as in the field of moral duty, is destructive of the soul.

But there is one fear which, so far from removing, religion must awake and intensify. When we sin, the spirit of fear must, sooner or later, inevitably take us captive ; for law is at the basis of all creation and life. A growing sense of apprehension will invade us on every side. The most harmless incidents of life, the very elements of nature, come to be charged with alarm, and so at last we seek to hide ourselves from God Himself. And yet it is not any change in God but change in ourselves that has given birth to such a fear. Our fear is not due to what God is, but to the evil we have ourselves wrought and made part of ourselves, and yet we know that, if we would but duly repent, we should be forgiven and restored to our place as sons and daughters in our Father's home.

In our ignorance we seek to hide ourselves from God, yet, even in our worse moments, we do not desire to be in a world where there is no God. Just reflect, if there were no God, there could be no limit to the growing terrors of life on this earth : law, order, truth, honour, and love would sooner or later be extinguished, and a state infinitely worse

than primeval chaos would return. And reflect further: should there be another life, where also there was no God, but wherein sin and vice should reach their full intensity, and every form of hate and malignity and maleficence become supreme, that would be the wildest horror of all.

But, since God is supreme alike in this world and the next, such things are impossible. Hence, if we sin, our only hope of deliverance from our fears is to be found in God alone: from such fears there is no refuge—there can be none—save in God Himself.

We have been dwelling on the great truth that faith in God delivers from all fear. This truth the Psalmists express in many ways. Physical evils in their worst forms cannot affright the faithful, nor the wildest tempests make them afraid—whether it be the bolted storm, the rushing hurricane, the poisonous air, the earthquake shock. With their trust truly fixed on God they can, in the midst of such evils, calmly declare

" God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore will we not fear though the earth do change,
And though the mountains be moved in the heart of the seas;
Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."—*Ps.* xlvi. 1-3.[1]

Thus the Psalmists did not, any more than the saints of other ages, look to God for the removal of the physical evils that naturally beset the ways of men. But they looked to God for something infinitely greater: for courage to confront the wildest storms of nature, and not to be panic-stricken thereby: nay more, to confront them and draw from them fresh stores of faith and obedience.

[1]These words originally had probably a national reference, but if so they came soon to be used with an individual reference.

Trust in God grows in the measure of the dangers it encounters and overcomes.

Nor can moral and spiritual fears, however menacing, affright him who trusts in God. No man can lose his own presence of mind till he has first lost the consciousness of God's presence. Hence, though the man of faith stands alone, falsehood and wrong cannot blanch his cheek. Injure him they may; they may rob him of life itself; but they cannot weaken his set purpose, nor destroy his trust in God. From the very conflict he receives spiritual strength, and, even should he die, he finds death itself to be the gate to a larger and diviner life, and thus in apparent defeat proves himself to be more than conqueror.

To express this triumph over fear we may use the words of the Psalmist, where first of all he complains to God how sorely his enemies press him on every side, and then, rising into the confident expression of his faith, he declares:

> "In the day that I am afraid
> I will put my trust in thee."

And as he proceeds, in still stronger terms he proclaims:

> "In God have I put my trust: therefore I cannot fear."

And so, in the steadfastness of this trust, the Psalmist closes the words of the refrain with the question,

> "What can flesh do unto me?"—*Ps.* lvi. 4.

This study of faith as the deliverer from fear I cannot more fitly close than by passing from the consideration of faith to that of love, which is the highest power and the supremest grace of Christianity, and which embraces in itself the complete development of all that the Psalmists yearned for or aspired after. So long as fear exists in the relation of man to God, man's love of God is still imperfect.

Fear is of the nature of discipline, and includes the anticipation of punishment, but when love hath wrought her perfect work, then perfect love, as St. John writes, casteth out fear.

Thus love is the crowning grace of faith, whether it be the faith of the Old Testament or of the New.

THE VICTORY OVER THE WORLD

"Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the World." 1 *John* v. 4.

THE great festival which Christian devotion has consecrated to the commemoration of the Nativity of Christ has once more come, and once more passed away. In both hemispheres, in all lands and in almost every tongue, in the chapel on the hillside and in the stately Church and Minster, in the quiet home and in the camp of war, the voice of thanksgiving has been lifted up for the coming of Christ into the world, and the strain of thankfulness has grown with the measure of man's wisdom in the significance of that great historic truth.

The words of my text are not spoken directly of the Incarnation though they imply it: their import is universal, they are true of each and every divine element manifested in the life of man, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." And these words, moreover, declare—not that what is born of God *has* overcome the world, nor yet *will* overcome, but that it *is overcoming*: the struggle is present and continuous. And even so, though in one sense it is true that our Lord has overcome the world, yet in another sense, and the one harmonising with our text, He too is daily overcoming the world: in every overthrow of tyrannic wrong, in every unselfish deed, in every act of true forgiveness, in every triumph of love, the Christ is overcoming; and the conquest will not be complete till He hath put all things under His feet, however distant that climax may be—here or hereafter, in this world, or in the countless other worlds of God's creation. And further, herein in all our strife against the world within and the world

without, we are not fighting singlehanded, or for a solitary individual aim ; for the battle is the Lord's, and, if we have but eyes to see, the Christ is ever leading in the van.

Next it is natural to ask, what does the phrase " the world " mean in the words before us, and, if we do so, the answer is obvious. " The world " in our text clearly denotes anything and everything that comes between our souls and God. Accordingly it is not to be limited to such things as unworthy passion, or selfish interest, or set wickedness. Nay, things that are good in themselves may come rightly under this designation if they obstruct communion between man's soul and God. The temptations of the world may come to us through our exclusive devotion to household cares, to business, to patriotism, to science, art, or thought : may whisper to us through a parent's voice, or may allure us through the well-meant advice of a friend into a fatal acquiescence in our own unworthiness

In short, whatever it be that comes between the soul and its living communion with God—that essentially is " the world."

At no time in the history of the individual or the nation, and especially in these days of crisis and judgment, can the Christian life be one of inglorious warfare or self-indulgent ease. Ours is the severe prerogative of an existence belonging in part to the spirit and in part to the flesh : and the conjunction in one person of these conflicting natures naturally produces strife, turmoil, and confusion : the difficulty of living a life true to the higher nature, of overcoming the world, is known to every son of man from childhood onwards.

In our weakness we oftentimes pray for the removal of all such difficulties in the path of duty and of right. But, since such prayers are too often the outcome of our fears and ignorance, we must not heedlessly indulge or stay ourselves upon them ;

for, if our trials and difficulties were removed in any other way than through the victory of our faith in God and the earnest effort of our will, then our goodness would not be worth the having, and our religion would cease to be a religion of the spirit.

Conscious, then, of the dignity of our being we will not pray to be delivered from trial, but for strength to endure it; not that temptation may never come, but that, when it does come, we may have power to master it, and in due time to be more than conquerors.

To realise in personal experience the truth that whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, it is not enough that our spirit should be from God, that we should be His children, made in His likeness, and baptised into the name of Christ: no, our spirit must be fed on divine food, else it will perish of spiritual famine. And this divine food is provided for us continually by the ministrations of God's Spirit in our hearts. Yes, deep down in our hearts, even in the weakest and most faithless of us, are inspirations coming to us from God—lofty thoughts and noble impulses, contrite longings, visitations of holiness rebuking our shame, hunger and thirst after the Living God.

But though these are in us, they are not of us; through God's grace they come to us unbidden: and, if we would make them our own, if we would feed our souls with this divine food from Heaven, we must translate them into the reality of living deeds, clinging fast to them with fear and trembling, with reverence and love, till they yield us all their blessing, and fulfil in us their God-appointed end. Yes, if these inspirations of God's Spirit are really to be born in us, it is not sufficient that we should give our thoughts to meditations on them, or congratulate ourselves on their appearance within us: nay, if it is thus we treat them, these divine guests will soon cease to visit us, and we shall be left to the stagnation

of a heart untroubled because dead in trespasses and sins. Nay rather, we must offer them a true devotion, we must vow obedience to them at all costs, we must surrender ourselves to these voices of God; and, just in the measure in which we are faithful to them, they will mould our lives anew, and more and more Christ will be formed in us, and our daily experience will be "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world."

These inspirations God works in us that we may work them out, may give them an actual living embodiment in our character: for only when they are actually translated into life, are they truly and indeed born in us.

But how partially we work out what God works in us! How often we find strong religious feelings and passions in combination with a very feeble conscientiousness! How often does popular religion mean nothing more than a sense of weakness and a desire for protection; a medley of fears and religious emotions, shot through, it may be, at times, with a passionate and unintelligent gratitude for its uncovenanted mercies and special Providences: perfunctory prayers, whether in private or in public; and, strangest of all, mere attendance at Holy Communion without sharing in the elements. What a caricature is this of the Christian life!

Thus, but too frequently, so-called religion embraces no aspiration of the soul, no desire for personal holiness, no thirst for the living God. And thus too many professing Christians combine outward religious devotions with flagrant imperfections of character. Such natures want a religion which will do everything for them, and relieve them of the necessity of doing anything: they want a religion that will assure them of safety without obliging them to renounce personal failings and self-indulgences: and so they seize with eagerness on the various schemes of salvation which popular teachers of their day

prescribe for distempered and diseased souls. The same characteristics were rife in the devotees of the ancient Mystery Religions of pagan Greece and Rome, and appropriate provision is made nowadays for such unspiritual characters in many of the Christian Churches.

But is such a religion, in any sense, a power that overcometh the world? That is the test. Is it befitting sons and daughters of God, whose aim should be to become perfect, even as their Father in Heaven is perfect? Is it not rather, with its hollow respectabilities, its spiritual blindness, its abysmal ignorance and selfishness, an actual means of stifling the inspirations of God's Spirit, and making men slavish believers in merely outward things?

Are there not numbers who, though professing to fear God, have naught but the fear of their neighbours before them; who dread more the contingency of being found out than the actual commission of the sinful deed: who worship success rather than virtue, and wealth rather than goodness; who allege a living interest in religion, and yet do not give for its furtherance a tithe of what they spend in needless self-indulgence?

Are not such characters to be met with everywhere, whose Christian graces are conspicuous by their absence, whose lives are not marked by vanquished temptations, by generous deeds, by noble enthusiasms, by the joy of sacrifice. And yet, however profoundly they have debased themselves, may we not surmise that deep down in their hearts, at least in the greater number of them, deeper than all their worship of mammon, their selfishness, commonplaceness and superstitiousness, their one true, realest yearning is to be something noble, something heroic, something Christlike, in the world, before they leave it. Now the need of such, indeed, of all men in some measure, is a different conception of religion; for the aim of true religion is not to

expiate our sins by some external means, and generally at the cost of someone else, but to seek to be spiritually transformed: it is not to be the mere succour of our weakness, as it must be at times, but the educator of our strength.

The aim of true religion is given in our Lord's words "Be ye perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect." It is such religion, and none other, that is truly and continuously overcoming the world.

Hence the fruits of such religion cannot be the result of mere environment or heredity. The congenital kindliness of heart, the constitutional generosity, the hereditary sense of honour and truthfulness, however excellent and attractive in themselves, are only natural endowments and not acquired graces, and in them the spiritual travail of the soul has neither part nor lot: they are unearned legacies coming to us from the faithfulness of our forbears in the past.

But in the Christian graces, in purity, in truth, in humility, in love and forgiveness, in faith and divine peace, there is something of a heavenly fire, which, while irradiating our human nature, has not been kindled by any act of our own, but by the very Spirit of God.

And yet no natural virtue, or capacity, or hereditary endowment of man is exempt, or can be exempt, from the influence of religion. Religion subdues them to its service, and by such conquest transforms them: it takes hold of the original instincts and feelings and transmutes them from mere animal or natural impulses into spiritual powers: it takes captive the appetites and makes them satisfied with their rightful servitude: it bridles anger and yokes it to the car of justice and righteous indignation: it spurs on the sluggish will: it turns the gaze of the ambitious heart from thoughts of high place and power to quiet unpretentious duties: it wakes piety from its slumbers, and constrains it to begin its tasks

anew. And thus it is that religion braces our entire nature, and makes us strong, in Christ's conception of strength, as physicians among the sick: endows us with power to live with men as they are, and yet part with no ideal, lose no vision of holiness, with power often to evoke the good that is in them, while proving insensible to the contagion of their evil: to resist the world's flatteries: to take contentedly the back seat: to feel no undue elation at success, or discouragement at outward failure, and to find, often, even in disappointment and affliction the dearest tokens of God's love. Verily it is such religion that is born of God: it is such religion that overcometh the world. The ideal it offers is lofty, yet possible for all; nay, more, it is what God intended for us all; but there is needed on our part for its attainment an earnest will—a will that works in fellowship with the Divine Will. And have we not here the secret of our spiritual failures? Why are our spiritual conflicts so often doubtful? Why do they so often issue in defeat? Because we are not really in earnest: we are only half-heartedly what we are: we do not surrender ourselves, spirit, soul, and body, to the influences of God's Spirit: we do not make our chiefest interests vail to His paramount claims. Ours is a divided service, and ours are the weakness and discomfiture indissolubly bound therewith. Like the sometime dwellers in Palestine, we would serve God and worship our graven images, and we do both things quite contentedly, and no doubt with the conviction that we are passably good Christians, so long as these services do not appear to clash. But when they do clash, and God calls us to a task which endangers our hold on the good things of this world—its respect, our physical comforts, or personal ambitions—if the sense of duty be weak within us, we sacrifice without much ado the life of righteousness for the life of self-pleasing, and not unfrequently we seek to excuse our baseness with some plea of

self-justification ; for no coward ever skulks from the field without belittling the cause he has betrayed. But never with impunity can we betray the cause our God has committed to us ; for from every such scene of decision we go forth tried, sentenced, and condemned, and already beginning to reap the fruits of our spiritual shame in a meaner heart, a baser character, in a deeper blindness to duty and the love and light of God.

Or, again, if the sense of duty be stronger and yet not predominant, when the need of sacrifice arises, we are thrown into a fever of conflicting impulses and desires, are tossed now hither, now thither ; and as the fever of the spirit grows, there grows likewise a nervous irritability, a tendency to find fault with others, and fasten on them the guilt of our own faithlessness. Let us be honest with ourselves, my brethren. This disease is an internal one : it arises from the lack of true earnestness, from a half-hearted dedication of ourselves to God. If in the depth of our hearts it is our chief desire to serve God, and God only, let us make an unqualified surrender, let us not spare a single hurtful indulgence or besetment, though dear to us as our right hand or precious as our right eye, and then, as surely as God is a God of truth, as He loves us with an everlasting love, He will enter our hearts with His forgiveness and peace, with His strength and righteousness. And, thus, having forsworn our own ends and elected to follow God's, we shall stand loose from the world's standards and move freely whithersoever the voice of God shall summon us, and realise in the peace and power of a new life that whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.

Yes, an earnest conscientious will is what we need in order that the divine teachings of the Spirit of God may be truly born in us. And mark well the power of such a will in fashioning our character. Through the will we can direct the attention to some

objects, and withdraw it from others. We can determine what interests shall occupy our attention, and what interests shall be excluded. It is this power of the will over the attention that makes us answerable for our thoughts, and if we are answerable for our thoughts, we are answerable for our passions, and inclinations, and purposes; for no passion can live, if we steadfastly refuse to allow the thoughts to dwell upon it: no inclination can last, if the will steadily withstands it. And just as the resolute will, in fellowship with God, can starve out every evil passion, every wrong inclination, and the Delilahs of the imagination, so it can nourish and sustain all good desires; it can surrender the soul to Christ by determining what visitors shall be invited to enter and reign within it. The Master Himself declares: "If any man will open the door I will come in to him and dwell with him." "Whosoever *will*, let him take of the water of life freely."

This power of the will is made stronger by whatever deepens its sense of responsibility, and hence it is that frequently the best method of strengthening a feeble, aimless, and irresponsible will is to lay it under the burthen of larger responsibilities. The lower the sense of responsibility, the poorer is the life, and, generally, the more faithless; and, conversely, the enlarged sense of responsibility often gives birth to a larger conscientiousness and a truer life: and so the thoughtful observer sees again and again how natures that were running to waste have been saved and made worthy members of society by some unexpected duty being laid upon them.

Hence the dangerous time of life is that period when the capacities are ripe for action, and yet there is no constraining necessity to give them any special direction, and engage them in earnest work; for the real battle of life is, as a rule, decided in youth, and after-life is only the natural fruit that follows the promise of the early years. It is a sad truth that a

soul may be really spiritually desecrated and handed over an easy prey to the destroyer before it has attained maturity; and the infinite interests attending on such an issue impart a terrible solemnity to such a struggle in the eyes of the thoughtful. And when those of us who have been through the strife recall our own life-and-death struggle in the past, we are filled with a yearning sympathy that longs to take our inexperienced brother by the hand, and go with him through the mists and darkness, the storms and lightnings, of the spirit world.

But the wish may not be satisfied. We can only give you, our younger brethren, some words of counsel, we can only, as it were, accompany you to the field of conflict: we can only cheer you on, and bid you quit yourselves like sons and daughters of the Most High; beyond that our kindly offices may not pass: with your souls' strife no stranger may intermeddle. But, though we must perforce stand apart and only witness your spiritual prowess from afar, there is very nigh unto you the Lord of Life, and nighest when the battle is sorest, and to Him you can breathe out every fear, to Him confess every weakness, to Him set forth your sad disloyalties, to Him lay bare your wearing discordant passions; and sooner or later, though the outward eye seeth not, the Lord will take possession of your heart, will banish the unseemly rout of evil passions and will drive forth every fear but the fear of offending Him, and bestow upon you His own unlimited forgiveness and peace and power.

But though we thus gain, in some supreme moments of communion, the consciousness that Christ has undertaken our strife and that, virtually, in Him we have already overcome the world, yet there is a long warfare we have to wage in His might; for though the Canaanite is in the main conquered, yet he is still in the land; and many an ancient cowardice, many an old established infirmity, many a sin of the

past, will rise up afresh and trouble us, still seeking to recover and maintain their bygone empire in our hearts.

But, after all, these are within us only as aliens and intruders: they are here for us to vanquish and overcome: they are here to test our loyalty, to approve our courage, to exercise our virtue, to confirm our endurance: they are here to be overthrown and expelled by the grace of God working in us, so that daily in our lives we may verify the truth "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." Thus the very difficulties that seem to make a true life impossible are transformed into the very means of lifting our life Godward.

The struggle is not uncertain, my brethren; we are all called to be conquerors, we can all be victors; and so, with this assurance that has never in a single instance failed the man that has wholly trusted himself thereto, God sends His children into the world's strife, against the serried hosts of evil within, without, and in this ennobling strife they individually find that whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

True Religion presupposes the Doing of God's Will, and ensures the Deliverance from all Fear

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." *Ps.* xxiii. 4.

The twenty-third Psalm, from which my text is taken, is perhaps the most familiar and loved of all the Old Testament Psalms. It is as dear to the Christian as to the Jew. It has helped and strengthened countless millions, and yet, as of many of the world's greatest things, its author is altogether unknown, and we are wholly uncertain even as to the century in which it was written. Scholars assign it to various dates. Some ascribe it to the ninth century or earlier, while Duhm and others would bring it down to the second. Whatever be its date, it seems most natural to assign it to some period subsequent to the time of Jeremiah. The ground for this view is to be found in the fact, if we may call it a fact, that the writer expresses the trust, the hopes and fears, not only of the nation, but also of the individual Israelite. Before the time of Jeremiah the great prophecies and psalms of Israel dealt only with the expectations and experiences of the nation. But just on the eve of the exile, when the nation would cease to exist, Jeremiah broke with the teaching of the past, and declared that God would establish in the coming days a new relation between Himself and the nation as a whole. Hitherto the individual had been related to God only as a member of the nation, and, as such, had shared, whatever his

nature and character might be, in the national judgments. The individual had no access to God save through the priest or prophet. The nation was the religious unit. Thus in the face of the coming exile, when the nation was to be shattered and resolved into its primitive elements, Jeremiah was the first to conceive religion as the communion of the individual soul with God.

Scholars are at variance as to the main object of the Psalm. Some will have it that it was written to express the hopes and fears of the nation; others that it was to express the hopes and fears of the individual. Into the question we cannot enter here.

Of the national element in the psalm there can be no question. God was indubitably acclaimed frequently in the Old Testament as the Shepherd of Israel, but Israel's Shepherd, according to the new theology of the exile, could not ignore the individual. This truth, so vividly taught by Jeremiah and enforced by Ezekiel, seems here to find its classic expression.

If we are justified in finding the experiences of the individual soul portrayed in the psalm, then we are justified also in assigning it to the fifth century before the Christian era or later. But, whether or no we recognise the individual element as an original constituent of the psalm, there can be no doubt that it is this element, and this only, that has made a universal appeal since the Christian era. Since the beginning of this era the national element of the psalm has been wholly ignored by the Christian Church, alike in public and private devotion; for the tender mercies of God are not confined to Israel or any other nation exclusively. Thus the individual is justified from every standpoint in using this psalm in reference to his own religious experience. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me: Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me."

Now, to begin with, let me summarise the teaching of the psalmist set forth in these noble words. First, they give the essential element in faith as distinguished from mere belief. Secondly, they presuppose trial and storm as the discipline of faith, and not ease and security. Hence the object of faith is not safety and comfort, but the doing of God's will. Thirdly, in the doing of that will man reaches the consummation of his faith, which is life in God, and which carries with it deliverance from the fear of all evils and all enemies, and from subjection to any power less than that of God Himself.

1. First, then, the psalmist gives the essential element in faith, and this is trust in God: "Thou art with me." Faith is trust in a person, and religious faith is trust in God. Belief, on the other hand, is concerned with intellectual conceptions, opinions and dogmas, and herein it is to be sharply distinguished from faith. Faith, though it must express itself in certain formulas of belief, is not to be identified with these formulas: it is a thing infinitely greater. Belief is not faith. There may be belief in abundance, and no faith whatever. Belief in regard to God is a conviction of the intellect; faith in God is the conscious surrender of the life to God: the consciousness that God is with us, quickening our conscience, awaking us to our unworthiness, filling us with pain and shame when we resist the appeal of His Spirit, and gladdening our hearts when we return to Him with the heartfelt knowledge of His forgiveness, and strength, and love, and peace.

You must take for granted the greatest things in religion, if you would even in a minor degree understand the smallest, and set them in their own appropriate place. But, though faith is lacking in demonstrative knowledge, it always presupposes a growing knowledge. Hence, if our particular form of faith is blinding us to fresh truths as they arise: if it is refusing to be corrected by research or science

or thought, then it is fast tending to become no better than a childish credulity of savage superstition—a dread and worship of the incomprehensible, expressing itself in a no less incomprehensible ritual and magic.

Our faith must, of course, express itself in certain intellectual forms, and the individual believer, if he is sincere, cannot do otherwise than be loyal to the truths he has found to be spiritually life-giving. But faith is not to be confounded with the acceptance of certain doctrinal statements. A man may accept all the creeds of the ancient councils, all the Thirty-Nine Articles, all the decrees of the Council of Trent; he may accept even the Westminster confession, and not possess a shred of true faith. The devils, according to St. James, have no objection to creeds: "they believe," he declares, "and tremble."

Men may accept the entire system of Christian beliefs, and yet remain sheer self-seekers and materialists—thralls of the world's pleasures, dupes of the world's vanities, victims of the world's illusions. While they give an intellectual assent to the awful facts of God, judgment, and eternity, all the while self-seeking and self-assurance, sloth and sensuality, may be rotting their noblest powers, and envy and malice, meanness and uncharitableness, may be consuming all that is best within them.

And yet, while faith is not a mere matter of the intellect, it is just as certainly not the offspring of darkness and ignorance. True faith mobilises, and calls into action, the entire powers of the personality of man. It is the child of light and knowledge. But this knowledge always falls far short of demonstration. If you insist on having demonstrative evidence, then you are stipulating not for faith but for knowledge. But this lack of demonstrative evidence is not peculiar to faith. Even in science and philosophy, when you pass beyond the elementary stage, you cannot get demonstrative evidence.

Faith, then, is in its essence not belief, whether with the evidence for or against it, but trust in God, and loyalty to the Master, in scorn of utmost consequence.

True faith is a witness to the invisible against the visible, and is therefore the source of the wisdom that shapes our life when it is best shaped. And yet the belief is too prevalent that the best wisdom is derived from a wide and varied knowledge of men and things. A wide experience, indeed, confers a ready skill in applying the principles of right, and endues its possessor with the knowledge of the seat of need and the most efficient means of help; but the widest experience is powerless to create the principles of right, or to supply the motive that leads to their realisation. When a man derives his graces or his virtues from mere experience, his goodness must be the result of past wrong-doing, the penalties of which have compelled him to adopt more prudential courses. His conduct is still but the product of a farther-sighted selfishness. That is, the man who is now honest merely because experience has taught him to be so must have begun life as a knave; and if he is still honest for no higher reason than that honesty is the best policy, he is still no better than a rogue at heart. It is not, then, experience that makes a man shrink instinctively from dishonour and falsehood, or endows him with the generous heart, or fills him with noble purpose. These are the inspiration of faith whereby some likeness of the Father in Heaven is wrought out in the life of man, His child.

For faith—that is, our life which is hid with Christ in God—brings the wisdom of God to bear on the facts of human experience, and shapes these into a history at once heroic and divine, and thus every faithful man's life becomes in part a revelation of God on earth.

Faith, moreover, is a reconciling and binding

power in human life, but not so mere beliefs. Beliefs, unless they are the expression of a living, growing faith, tend to sunder men and become disintegrating forces. Hence the greater the emphasis that is laid on beliefs or dogmas as constituting the essence of faith, the more unspiritual the faith becomes, and so far as any individual Church makes its membership depend on the acceptance of its own distinctive decrees, definitions, or creeds, so far does it exclude itself, not merely from the body of Christ's Church dispersed throughout the whole world in the present, but also from the community of all faithful men since the world began. In all our Lord's teachings in the Synoptic Gospels only once did He lay supreme stress on a dogmatic question, and even that can hardly be so designated; for belief in a blessed future life is not merely an article of religion, but a postulate of the reason, and an axiom of every life that transcends a purely material outlook.

The one test that our Lord gave to His disciples whereby to distinguish His true followers from the false was the rule "By their fruits ye shall know them." To moral excellence wherever found, to faith wherever it manifested itself, He ever extended a willing and glad recognition. In such wise He welcomed the faith of the Syrophenician woman, and the goodness of the Samaritan, setting an example that the Churches that bear His name have too rarely followed.

Faith is therefore a living and a growing thing, and must find expression in life: faith accordingly cannot be static: it is at once living and dynamic in character.

It is a spiritual force, and its aim is the conquest of the world for God. Where it is really present in the heart of the individual, there is spiritual progress, the conscience is being daily quickened, the desires purified, and the will brought more and more into obedience to Christ. But the activities of faith are

never limited to the soul that is uplifted by its inspiration. Faith is the open-sesame to all goodness, not only in this world, but throughout the universe. It is the power that opens the lower nature to the fulness of the higher, and so receives of its wisdom, and grows strong with its strength; it becomes a creative energy, co-operating with the Spirit of God, and brings to pass things that otherwise would not, or could not, have been. Faith in its Godward relation declares, on the one hand, with the Psalmist "all my fresh springs are in Thee," and, on the other, it sees in vision the fulfilment of the divine will in the coming time, the creation of the new heaven and the new earth, wherein God dwells with men.

But faith is trust, not in God alone, but also in man. As it opens our being to God and makes us one with Him, an instrument of His will, so it opens our nature to our fellow-man. For, unless we repose some faith in our brethren, we can neither share in their spiritual gifts, nor help to quicken with our own the goodness that is already theirs. Apart from faith there can be no true reverence for others, none for ourselves. Faith is the root from which all true reverence and all true self-respect spring. Self-respect, apart from a living, growing faith, cannot fail to become hurtful and dangerous, cannot do other than degenerate into pride and self-idolatry, in which a man becomes his own idol, his own god. It is this fact, that faith opens our nature to what is best in our fellow-man, that explains the barrenness of the disbelieving life. The disbelieving life, if only it lasts long enough, becomes barren and cynical, since by its own action it excludes itself from the life of God, and from what is best in the life of man. Unbelief is exclusive, but it succeeds only in excluding itself from all that is best in life. It is this fact that in the main explains the fruitfulness of youth; for youth with its wealth of trust is open to truth

and inspiration from countless sources, and so youth is generally the period of growth and large ideals, the period when man garners his best harvests of truth and character.

But as with the passing years man falls into distrust of his fellow-men, the avenues that lead to their fulness are often cut off, and so a man may die of spiritual starvation in the land of spiritual plenty. And yet there is no necessity for any man ever to lose his youth in this respect. In fact, if to the natural trustfulness of youth he adds the Christian's faith in God and man, then he grows younger with the growing years: he wins a spiritual courage and fearlessness and wisdom which were unknown and impossible in the days of his youth, but which are necessary for the rôle and character of an immortal, a rôle and character which by faith he has rightly made his own.

2. From the differentiation between faith and belief we pass on to the spiritual blessing which is mentioned in our text. This blessing is rightly represented as a result of faith, but multitudes, unfortunately, represent it as its object. This spiritual blessing is expressed in the words—"Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me." All true faith in God is attended with a blessedness which cannot be understood save by those that have in some measure experienced it. But God Himself is the object of their quest—not the blessedness that attends on its realisation.

But there are those that invert this order and seek God not for Himself but for what they hope to win thereby: whose aim is to redress the ills of the present life by the good things of the next. And so, since they are poor here, they count upon being rich there: oppressed with toil here, they expect to enter on eternal rest there: unknown and slighted here, they look there for the recognition of all their gifts and graces. Thus the selfish cravings of the soul

are projected into the world to come, where they hope to enjoy that self-indulgence they failed to achieve here, or have temporarily renounced, to be repaid a thousandfold there. This is no caricature of the expectations of many Christians. And it is not unnatural that they should make such consolations and rewards a ground for their religious activities, seeing that this irreligious doctrine is still taught in many places, and enforced in such hymns as that which contains the words :

> " Whatever, Lord, we lend to Thee
> Repaid a thousandfold will be ;
> Then gladly will we give to Thee,
> Who givest all."

No wonder, the cynic may remark, since the promise here is not a thousand per cent. interest, but a thousandfold repayment of the capital lent. The sick souls which cherish such immoral aims should be at once disabused of their error, and instructed that a religion which panders to selfishness and self-indulgence is both hurtful and wrong. To give up a present for a future self-indulgence is not to forego self but to cling fast to it. Selfishness is not to be overcome by postponing its gratification, nor is its nature changed by magnifying its object a thousandfold. It is an insult to religion to describe it as the sole means of finding comfort in conditions otherwise desperate.

Now, while, on the one hand, nothing can be more true than that it is only faith that can sustain the soul amid the most dire tribulation, on the other, to urge a man to seek faith solely with this end in view is to dishonour and degrade it ; for this means the man's clinging fast and desperately to his selfishness. Faith, it is certain, can sustain the soul under any difficulty and amid any temptation. Not only so, but it finds life the richer for its trials and conflicts. Christian character, in fact, cannot be realised

except in the face of difficulty. Its powers cannot be matured unless confronted by opposition and conflict, nor can the splendour of its free will reach its culmination, save when in spite of consequences, however dire, it makes its choice of goodness and of God. We now come to the result of true faith as stated in our text: "I will fear no evil for Thou art with me." With faith we attain to deliverance from fear and from the sway of all lesser powers than that of God Himself.

No difficulties beset this personal faith in God from the standpoint of research, science, or philosophy. The real trials of life are practical. Faith and fear in their essential character cannot co-exist in the same mind. Faith expels fear, or fear overcomes faith. No man ever loses his own presence of mind without first losing the consciousness of the presence of God. And yet, when the world confronts us at every turn with its store of false maxims, its justifications of easy virtue, and its pleas for comfort, compromise, and self-indulgence, a strong faith is needed to shape our life after the pattern shown us by Christ on the Mount, and so to live with men as they are, and yet part with no ideal we hold in reverence. The man of faith is not a nervous, anxious being, who looks as if he were trying to make the best of a bad job in an almost hopeless world. Such a person is a caricature of the man of faith. God, as the apostle assures us, has not given us the spirit of fearfulness, but the spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind. Faith in God can deliver us from all fear—but not by saving us from trial, disappointment, and the discipline of unfulfilled desires, nor yet by lessening our expectations of the evils incident to life. Such exemption from the common heritage no man inspired by the Christlike spirit could desire. That God should stoop to his wish, that he should be the object of special providences denied to his neighbour, might be the prayer of a

selfish heart or of a rude and unenlightened age, but it is not a Christian's prayer.

To bear a charmed life in the face of the arrow that flieth by day, or the pestilence that walketh in darkness; to be unharmed when thousands fall by his side, and ten thousands on his right hand—all this he would hold it impious to expect at the hands of the Heavenly Father.

Thus he looks not for a life fenced from the evils of the common lot, or secluded from the onsets of temptation, but for a spirit that shall deliver him from the fear of such evils, and carry him unscathed through its worst temptations.

It is indeed a noble and memorable truth, much forgotten and overlooked by man, that God delivers us not from our trials and difficulties, not from the attacks of our enemies, human or spiritual, but from our fear of these.

And never—at all events within the past century—has the power of a true faith been more needed than in the present day, when, at the close of the scenes of world-shaking horrors and disasters, men who were looking for the emergence of a new world find, instead, the commonwealth all but subverted for the selfish ends of individual groups within the state, and whole nations reverting in civilisation to an evil past. Truly in the face of such high hopes as we cherished throughout the war, it is a dire disillusionment to see country rising against country, class against class, one group of workers against another, each and all in turn professing great principles but giving them the lie in practice: to see old governments broken up in the august names of liberty, equality, and fraternity, and then, when the purblind but self-confident advocates of revolution find themselves absolutely incapable of replacing the systems they had overthrown, to witness, as in the case of Russia, their abject and craven surrender of the reins of government to a small minority, who, devoid of

truth, purity, and every form of righteousness, are hurrying the nation to the brink of the abyss.

In the presence of such grim realities, when the looked-for millennium seems receding indefinitely beyond the furthest horizons, Christian faith is put upon its trial, and upon it, likewise, is laid the burden of taking up its task anew and working out God's purposes in toil and sacrifice, in enlightened and renewed, if chastened, confidence.

These are no new experiences. If we turn to the chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews where we find the noble bead-roll of Old Testament heroes of the faith, we discover that they too were similarly tried, and that their spiritual stature is there measured by the steadfastness with which they confronted the world that had for the time shattered their noblest hopes, and yet failed to wreck their faith.

In conclusion, the task of our faith is both inward and outward. We have to subdue our covetousness, our lusts and passions, our envyings and our selfishness, our vanity and self-conceit, our fear of the world, and our love of power. We have also our outward task to achieve. We have to bear our Lord's reproach, to declare with fearless quietude unwelcome truths, to undertake unpopular tasks and pursue them in the face of repeated failure ; and if, in some lowly measure we perform these tasks, our lives will in that measure be transfigured, and we shall become more and more true fellow-workers with the Christian sons and daughters of the Eternal God.

CHRIST'S BEQUEST OF PEACE

" Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." *John* xiv. 27.

As we look around us, how full is human life of disquietude, dissatisfaction, and restlessness! How often the human heart, after the experience of years, comes to feel the shadow of an undefined trouble and unrest lie darkly upon it, and, as we look forth from the sphere of our disquiet backwards, upwards, and beyond, how often are we constrained to cry out that we can find nothing in life but the reflection of the vanity and vexation that fill our souls. All men, indeed, come, sooner or later, to break with the peace of unreflective childhood, and if, as they enter on the responsibilities of thoughtful years, they fail to find for themselves the peace of God, then indeed they put forth on a tempestuous sea, with no chart and compass to guide them, and are carried hither and thither by the gales of vanity, pride, or self-interest, or by the destructive blasts of passion. No wonder they become the prey of feverish desire, or fretting care, or wearing anxiety, or the victims of those wilder storms of passion, that desolate a lifetime's peace. And yet, what are all these dissatisfactions and troubles of heart but unconscious murmurings of a nature that has lost its true level and has so far been seeking it in vain ; what are this vexation and unrest but an unmistakable intimation that the elements of our nature are severed from their true centre, and have hitherto failed to find it? How can the soul be at ease which is conscious of its own voluntary degradation? how can there be peace for the man who has knowingly dishonoured his higher nature,

and turned his back on duty and on God? For the man thus unsettled there are but two courses open. He may deliberately quench the higher voices that rebuke his shame, and so reach a false and spurious peace, an unruffled quietude of hardened impenitence from which there is no waking save when some sudden shock of illness, or loss, or death, shoots through him an undefined chill, a shrinking and shuddering he cannot wholly understand. But this depression of spirit, which he would fain regard as merely physical, may soon pass away, and then back he returns, only to plunge more deeply into the old life of buying and selling, the old round of pleasure and self-indulgence, the old routine of public or domestic cares, and no thought throughout all of God, or Judgment, or Eternity. In a certain sense he has attained to peace; for no longer does the sting of conscience, or any vision of reproachful holiness, vex the stagnant quiet of his wasted godless life. Yes, in a certain sense he has attained to peace, but this peace is not the peace of harmoniously-working spiritual activities, but the state that follows on their suspension or annihilation. Better to have our whole frame convulsed with unrest, and troubled with self-accusing shame; for this condition is still one full of hope, and its discontent springs from our conscious unworthiness under God's reprovings, who will not suffer us to find peace while we pursue the ways of indifference or self-indulgence, or lodge in the abodes of wantonness or sin, but will scourge us with His love, till we forego the ills we cling to, and at last make willing choice of Himself as our portion for evermore. Under God's grace, this spiritual unrest is often the necessary preparation for the rest and blessedness that shall one day be ours.

But, unhappily, men will persist in misunderstanding what this unrest signifies, and to what alone it is designed to move them. They will have it that

it urges to the pursuit of additional outward comforts, and so they seek to find peace of soul by mending its material surroundings, to quiet desire by increase of ease, to ward off anxiety by the acquisition of greater wealth, to fence life against hostility, and to secure it against every physical discomfort.

This conception of peace Christianity rejects in its entirety: the peace of the soul cannot rest on personal comforts, or physical ease, or material strength, else with the failure of these its peace also fails. Christ throws the soul back on its own spiritual existence; not to a life of ease, but of spiritual effort and strife, are we called: "whoso doth not bear My cross cannot be My disciple." Thus Christ's bequest of peace is likewise, for His disciples, a commission that entails hardship and endurance, "My peace I give unto you," and, "in the world ye shall have tribulation." And that the world's peace is a false peace is learnt at some season by all men, and there comes a time, either here or hereafter, when, as they look back over the past, they can judge more wisely of the worth of things. Such a time may come at any period of a man's life. With many it may not come till life's close. When the battle of life is over, and we are quitting the field, shall we, then, suppose you, if our conscience awakes to its just responsibilities, wish that our lot had been more sheltered and secure from outward trial, and that our life had been richer in selfish ease, unbroken comfort, and conventional compliance? Shall we then regard with complacency our guilty compromises, our evasions of duty, and wasted hours? Nay, it is not possible. Should we not then, as we make such retrospect, be willing to exchange all the comfort, and plenty, and self-indulgence, that cost us so dearly, for a single vanquished temptation in the wilderness, for a single patient bearing of the cross our Lord gave us to bear? Nay, it is only when we look forward that we mistake the indulgence of

desire and seclusion from life's cares and difficulties for the peace we need; but as we look backward we are wiser; for it is only the pure and true and unselfish chapters of our lives that we can endure to read without the stings of conscience or the pangs of self-accusing shame.

And yet, though we know the nature of Christ's peace so well, how loath we are to surrender the world's conception of peace. How often, when God plunges us in affliction and takes from us the blessings that endanger our peace, do we forget the aim of such visitation, and, instead of bowing our souls to His loving correction and cleansing them from the sins that drew down His chastening hand, we still give our thoughts to our outward circumstances: we proceed to number the blessings that yet remain; we reflect that our losses might have been greater, and so with our unspiritual reckonings we conclude that we have still sufficient good things left to justify our submission, or even half-hearted thankfulness, and that there are still sufficient materials remaining out of which we can build anew an earthly house of repose.

And yet, it is just because we sought to make a permanent home in such passing earthly interests that God shattered this tabernacle of our peace. Mere submission, mere resignation, to God's chastisement is not the primary aim of such chastisement, but to lead us to transfer our interest from the mere shifting scenes of life to the soul that passes through them: to teach that God designs for us here no Eden of earthly comfort: that the peace given of Him consists in a humble heart, in a forgiving spirit, in a living strenuous faith, and in a will that is the ready servant of God's voice within us: that for the further growth of these God is variously shaping the lot He has assigned us, and that the end of all blessings, whether of friendship, or love, or wealth, or power of mind or body, as well as of their with-

drawal from us, is that we may grow up in Christlike faith, and knowledge, and independence, and love, and find therein that quietness of heart which the world has never given and the world cannot take away.

And, indeed, till a man feels such a peace within him, a peace independent of outward circumstance and passing understanding, a peace which exempts him, not from affliction and loss, but from unrest and misery of spirit, he has not yet built his house upon the rock, nor secured himself against the winds that beat upon, and the storms that overwhelm, the mere earthly house of repose.

But unrest of soul may arise not from deliberate guilt or any present visitation of God's hand from without; it may consist in a haunting sense of disquiet, an undefined feeling of wrongness, a passion of unrest, that we cannot wholly understand, and that yet robs us of ease of mind and joy of heart. Now if we would ask: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me?" the answer is not far to seek. As, in the natural world, a man's ignorance does not save him from the consequences of his breach of natural law, so likewise, though the worst penalty of sin can only befall the wilful offender, the breach of God's spiritual laws, however ignorantly committed, is followed by a train of sorrowful effects; and the first knowledge of our disobedience may come to us in this haunting spirit of unrest, which we cannot trace either to conscious wrongdoing, or to discontent with our outward lot.

This spiritual unrest, my brethren, arises from a breach between our vows and our performance, from indulgence in tempers and habits and ways that are at war with the true peace of our souls, from an imperceptible declension from the Christlike spirit into indubitable worldliness of heart, from a conviction that, somehow, we have erred from the right

way, that we are not what we might have been, that we have not entered on the paths God opened for us, nor seized the opportunities He put within our reach.

How often we find that this internal disquiet unfits us for enjoying the daily goodness of God! Which of us has not felt that many an outwardly happy scene has proved a mere weariness of spirit, a flat unprofitableness, because the burden of some neglected duty, the indulgence in some small vanity or malice, the yielding to some venial act of untruthfulness or the suppression of truth, though it may for the moment have passed from remembrance, lay on our conscience, and so the shadows of our past unfaithfulness were darkening our present peace?

What remedy, my brethren, can we find for this disquiet? It will not be found in further knowledge of our duty; for, alas! most of us are perishing from too much knowledge, which we honour in our thoughts, and dishonour in our lives. Our spiritual weakness, moreover, springs not so much from deliberate wickedness as from the dreary, almost immeasurable, interval that lies between our creed and our conduct, between the glory we reverence in our thoughts and the unspiritual commonplace nature of our lives. So long as this immeasurable interval exists, there can be no true peace, nor can we hope to recover it by painless acknowledgments of our depravity, and confessions that we are miserable sinners. No peace of God can dawn on our hearts till we become really in earnest, and toil to bring our lives into conformity with the light our Lord has given us. "Strive," our Lord commands us, "Strive to enter in at the straight gate," and, if we are to keep the path to which that gate admits, we must strive still. If we confess a great creed, our lives must in some measure express a great faith, else we shall inevitably sink into hypocrisy or scepticism: if we have learnt great truths, there must be some corres-

ponding greatness in our lives, else these very truths will demoralise and corrupt us. To save the present generation from the condemnation that our Lord pronounced on His own, to make the great spiritual illumination of our age healthgiving and safe, necessitates a growing faithfulness to Christ, rich sacrifices of love, generous deeds of brotherhood, fearless confessions of truth. Devoted living and the active service of God are the only cure for such disquiet of heart.

But, again, we may suffer from disquiet of spirit, not from any despair of ourselves, but from the pressure of men's sins and sufferings on our hearts, and especially from the helplessness and debasement of those among whom our lot is cast. There are, in the main, but two ways of approaching the awful problem of evil. One man approaches it without any clue to interpret its difficulty, and in his bewilderment takes what he sees to be a vast moral chaos, and in his unbelief and despair cries out "let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die." Another man with a deeper and divine wisdom sees, as the greatest of all dramatists has said, "the soul of good in things evil," recognises in suffering and temptation the resistance which alone can discipline virtue, and make conscience great; and beholds even in gigantic guilt the perversion of godlike powers. In God alone can we find this wisdom that gives us peace, and that for ever. In evil days, when good men struggle in vain against triumphant wrong in Church or State, when the world seems darkened by moral eclipse, and men's hearts are failing them for fear, then indeed we might tremble, but that there is One that keeps sleepless watch and ward, and makes even the wrath of man to praise Him; and therefore, rescued by our God out of the bewildering tumult of our thoughts into the calm of His lifegiving presence, we can look forth on evil, however triumphant, and recognise its inherent weakness, on goodness, and behold its

essential might. And, strengthened by such assurance, we can return afresh to the tasks our God has set us—renewed in courage and faith and hopefulness; for it is only the unfaithful and indifferent and indolent disciple that despairs; the heart that is rich in moral and spiritual victories can never believe that this world can become the scene of moral and spiritual defeat.

The trial of our faith is most severe when we sorrow over the impenitence and corruption of those with whom our lives are more or less closely bound up. But here again we have to throw ourselves back on the loving-kindness of our God, and in Him to find our rest. And to revive our drooping faith we have only to ask: In what relation does God stand to these prodigals from the home of His love? Does He despair of their return? or abandon them to their self-chosen banishment from His presence? Or does He not rather go after them into the wilderness and seek them till He find? Surely this assurance will give us peace despite many an outward reason for heaviness of heart, and this assurance will grow deeper as we grow more like unto our Lord in courage, in quiet patience, in gentleness, in unwearying effort, and unfailing love.

Only thus, my brethren, by carrying our faith actively and strenuously into every department of our life and thought, can we enter more fully and more deeply into the peace our Lord bequeathes, and come to realise in that experience the significance of His promise: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

GOD'S WISDOM FOR THE HUMBLE

" In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." *Luke* x. 21.

BOTH the Authorised Version and Revised Version of this verse are decidedly misleading, and not only misleading but even inconsistent in their errors[1], as we shall see presently. If the words of our text were correct we should, in these days when truth and equity and wisdom are sought eagerly for their own sake, have to ask in our despair some such questions as these : Does it seem a just matter for thankfulness, that from the sage should be hidden that which is revealed to the babe ? a matter for joy of heart that darkness should be the unfailing portion of the seeker for light ? and that the guerdon of the inquirer after wisdom should be exclusion from the kingdom of knowledge ? Are we to believe that the more ardent our pursuit of truth in the spheres of religious thought and experience, the more inevitable shall be our failure to attain it, and that its achievement shall fall to the lot, not of its devoted disciples, but rather to the children of the untrimmed lamp, the unused talent, and the ungirded loin ? Do these words of our Lord require us to believe that the sages of all periods of the world's history, who to their kingship in the realm of thought added personal purity and goodness, are specially excluded from the true wisdom and light of God, and that all the favours of Heaven are reserved for the narrow sectary, the uncultured bigot, the unthinking zealot, and the illiterate devotee ?

[1]If the translators say " the wise " they should also say " the babes " to maintain some consistency in error.

But our Lord's words, rightly translated, are not the vehicle of any such absurdities and untruths. Instead of "Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent," we should translate "Thou hast hidden these things from wise and prudent ones": that is, from *certain* wise and prudent persons, but not from the entire class of the wise and prudent; and hast revealed them unto babes, that is, *some* babes, not the entire class of babes. It is the insertion of the article in the translations, which does not occur in the Greek, that leads to all these wrong conclusions. Neither in Matthew nor in Luke does our Lord speak of "*the* wise," of "*the* babes," but of some selfwise individuals, and, over against these, of some individuals possessing the childlike heart. It is not from the cultured mind that God conceals Himself, but from the heart that is arrogant and selfish, proud and self-satisfied, and these vices may characterise the clown as well as the man of culture, the churl no less than the sage. Our Lord's words, however, do mean that it is quite possible to be the master of a varied knowledge, and yet to be ignorant of the most elementary things in the Kingdom of God; and, on the other hand, to have a true mastery in things divine, and yet to be all but wholly unversed in other lore.

Let us, therefore, consider in what respect the spirit of childhood is of one and the same nature with the temper of mature and religious manhood.

What truer picture of man as a member of God's Kingdom can be found than that of a child in its own home? Mark how continuously a child is controlled by the parental care: his rising and his retiring to rest, his going out and his coming in, his times of recreation and his hours of study, are all duly appointed for him, nor may he even choose friend or associate, save with his parents' approval. In fact, no despotic power could exercise so jealous a supervision of its subjects as that which surrounds the

child in his home. And yet his look shows no painful sense of the constraining influence that is ever moulding him, and he that runneth may read on his youthful open brow the characters that speak, not of a crushing servitude, but of an amplest freedom. And why? Not, indeed, that there is no selfwill in the child's mind; for selfwill is assuredly there, but that his love and reverence are strong to subdue it: he is sheltered, moreover, from all anxieties: he is disciplined by a father's wisdom, and by the kindly teachings of a mother's self-forgetfulness: in danger, he clings fast to the hand that leads him: in doubt, his uncertainty is resolved by a single look to the eye that guides him: and when he does refuse to submit, either his momentary disobedience is quelled by a glance, or else, by his voluntary return to a father's love and sympathy, he tacitly confesses that only in unlimited wholehearted obedience can he find unlimited freedom. In this childlike trustfulness in that which is above it, and in teachableness, we have the essential characteristics common to childhood and the mature religious mind, and not in any supposed devotional spirit, which a child may or may not possess, and not in any singular purity which is mistakenly ascribed to childhood by those who confuse true moral purity with an innocence which is generally mainly ignorance.[1] Thus we discover how it comes to be that the mature mind may present a no less fitting theatre than the child's for the exercise of the religious spirit.

As the child's well-being consists in his free, unfettered movement within the limits prescribed by the parental rule in perfect filial obedience, so the spirit of devout and mature manhood manifests itself in a like unfettered movement within the limits of a higher law prescribed by God in a complete self-surrender to the Divine Will; and as the child's growth consists in a continuous adaptation of his

[1]See p. 22 for the distinction of "purity" and "innocence."

mind to the mind of his parent, so spiritual growth in the mature mind consists in its ever-growing likeness to the mind of our Father in Heaven. And this is none other than the prescript laid down by our Lord: "Be ye perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect." Again, as the obedience of the child is spontaneous and disinterested, so likewise is all true religious service. The words of the elder brother in the parable: "Lo! these many years have I been thy slave—and yet thou hast never given me a kid" are, so far as they express the elder brother's character, the plaint not of a true son, but of a discontented hireling.

Unhappily, this temper of our childhood is all but universally worn away by the hard attrition of a mean experience, and exchanged for lower moods. The spirit of trustfulness is displaced by one of worldly shrewdness, which demands inordinate guarantees ere it is willing to repose faith either in God or man. The wisdom of the affections is dislodged by the calculations of selfishness, and the capacity for dependence and disinterested action by prematurely adopted habits of independent action, and by an ever-growing self-centredness and self-regard.

The mind comes more and more to be pre-occupied with cares for food and raiment, with gain or pleasure, with self-indulgence or far-reaching ambitions, until its powers of receptivity, its openness to good influences, its hunger and thirst for the truth of God almost disappear. It surrenders its freedom to religious and scientific dogmatisms and prejudices, to hard and fast theories on everything human and divine; and becomes incapable of admitting any new knowledge which clashes with its own fixed ideas. And thus man's spirit is fettered and enthralled in the bonds of prejudice and selfwill, which cannot recognise a new or growing truth, save when some tearful discipline visits him from on high and, rending these

asunder, gives him again the spirit of his youth, and the sorrow of shame for his long estrangement from his Father's home. By this return to the childlike spirit the mind is not stripped of a single glory of its manhood; for this restoration to the Divine Presence is not the substitution of devout weakness and narrowness for manly vigour and open-mindedness: it is but the man's abandonment of a bigoted, unteachable, distrustful and arrogant spirit, and his frank acceptance of his true position as a growing child of God in God's own house—which is none other than the universe itself.

This self-surrender, further, so far from weakening man's capacities for command, strengthens them beyond measure; for in such case the exercise of command is but an outward expression of the heart's inward obedience unto God. What a strength of willing obedience does a parent inspire, when his children discern in his commands, not the harsh notes of selfwill or unregulated temper, but the expression of a Divine prescript—a prescript to which the father is no less subject than the child, and thus the father's words become for the child, to all intents and purposes, the words of God Himself. The conquest of human hearts is a witness to such faithful utterances, to the words we speak, yet speak not of ourselves, but from the Spirit of God that dwelleth in us.

But it is not religion only that calls for the open and teachable, the receptive and the trustful mind. In the researches of scholarship and of science the need of these is no less imperative. No progress was made in Natural Science till this fact was recognised. As our own great countryman, Bacon, in his *Novum Organum* (I, 68) has well put it: "The entrance into the Kingdom of man, which is founded on science, is none other than that into the Kingdom of Heaven, into which none shall enter save such as become as little children." No truer words have ever been

uttered. It is the childlike, the open, the receptive, the teachable mind to which the secrets of the humanities and of nature are made known, and to which the secrets of the universe will be made known in ever-growing measure in the far greater, immortal, life beyond.

It is not difficult to discover reasons for the greater blessedness and strength of a life governed by the childlike spirit. For, whereas the self-seeker or the pusher chooses his own ends, and his own ways towards the realisation of those ends, the man who is faithfully, however faultily, striving to be a child of God accepts the end that God sets before him. The former has no guarantee for the real worth of his choice save his own individual judgment: both in his choice of the objects he sets before him, and in his exertions to secure them, he acts wholly on his own responsibility, and is therefore full of anxiety and caution and frequently of discontent at the non-recognition of his merits and services—emotions that decidedly weaken his intellectual powers; the latter, having accepted God as his leader, is constantly led by ways that he knows not. He strives for the divinely-appointed goal with the certainty of God's approval, and therefore his efforts are marked with confidence, vigour, and liberty—qualities that decidedly strengthen his intellectual powers, his insight, and judgment. With the former, every step towards the end is a matter of calculation and anxiety, and only satisfactory when successful: if the end is lost, the self-seeker's life is practically lost also—at all events for the time being; for results and successes within the limits of this world's horizons are his sole aim and end; but with the child of God, results are of no vital moment: they may be favourable in the world's view, they may be unfavourable, but they can neither make nor mar his true blessedness; they are in his Father's hands, he is assured, and there he can confidently leave them.

Hence, while the man who is living for his own ends suffers from worry and distraction and stressful effort, the man who is seeking to live for God's ends enjoys ease of mind and self-possession, and so all the energies of his mind and spirit are unimpaired, and are flung in their complete integrity into the cause for which he labours. Thus he becomes an instrument, an organ of the Divine Will, to the realisation of which the entire powers of his soul are devoted. And who can gauge the might of these powers, when freed from every care and fear, and committed to the Almighty to wield them at His will? There is no more potent agent, my brethren, in this world than a human soul surrendered to what is diviner than itself. It is thus that we would explain the influence and the greatness of every great servant of God, and the life of such is an instance of what ours might be in some lesser measure; for such greatness—and after all it is the only true greatness—is communicable. The greatness of such characters arises, not from all but superhuman endowments and achievements, but from an unqualified self-surrender to the fulfilment of God's will; such a character determines not whither it shall go, but follows unhesitatingly whithersoever God may lead. Like the father of the faithful, every man, so far as he is becoming a child of God, goes forth not knowing whither he goes. He is God's chosen and true adventurer, alike in time and in eternity, and to him, sooner or later, here or elsewhere, the mysteries of the universe are disclosed. Such a man becomes more and more possessed with a divine contentment, a divine fulness and restfulness, which leave all his God-given faculties free to cope with the difficulties of the hour, and enable him to display unusual powers of insight, administration, and command. Thus it is only when the soul has relinquished all its merely self-centred ambitions that it has all its powers free, that it becomes itself a centre of divine

energy; and thus, further, we see that in the renunciation of the false self is to be found the winning of the true, and that from the fullest self-sacrifice arises the fullest self-possession and the fullest self-expression.

ALL GOOD THINGS ARE THE HERITAGE OF THE FAITHFUL

" Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." *Matt.* vi. 33.

ONE of the chief articles of the Christian faith is Christ's sovereignty over every province of human life—and this article finds expression in the all-embracing command of Christ, " seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

There are other laws that every right-minded man admits—whether he be religious or not—and these condemn cowardice, lying, impurity, drunkenness, and malignity. If a man professes to be religious, and does not strive to be courageous, true, pure, self-contained and charitable, his religion is at the best a mere hypocrisy.

Now it must be admitted that many men who make no religious profession whatever are often more truthful, generous, and trusty, than those who profess to be governed by the laws of Christ. Hence we may justly ask: how does this come about? The answer is not far to seek. It comes about through the false identification of religion, not with things spiritual and ethical, but with the acceptance and profession of certain creeds, which may not be wholly true, and, even when true, may be quite unintelligible to the individual; or because of its identification with the observance of certain forms which are in themselves matters of indifference. Nonetheless, right thinking and right practice are essentially related. Christian faith and Christian conduct, and all that is essential and true in all the creeds are included in the words: " Seek ye first the kingdom of God and

his righteousness." And with this command our Lord combines the precept, "Be not anxious," for no class of men is exempt from anxiety of some sort. And so the natural rejoinder of all men is: "how, with the pressure of human desires, needs, and ambitions, can we escape anxiety?" Many men—especially the young—make it their sole aim to have a good time of it; others, having outlived the passions of youth, set their heart on gain, others on a high place in things social or political, others on the acquisition of wealth for its own sake, that is, on covetousness, which, the New Testament declares, is idolatry. But the pressure of anxiety is most felt in the classes that at all times suffer from lack of food and clothing and housing.

The feeling of anxiety is as old as creation, and yet, in numberless instances, it is due to merely baseless fears. Indeed, we might say that in most civilised countries of the world the greatest part of the misery of man is due, not to the actual presence of trouble, but to the apprehension of it. Our fears exaggerate the evils of life, and thus our energies are sapped, our peace of mind destroyed, and our happiness ruined, by vague and groundless anxieties about possible evils in the offing. In fact, our life on earth is shortened, not so much by hard work, as by needless and incessant worry.

It is a common delusion that the rich are exempt from anxiety. But an old pagan poet of Rome was wiser when he said that you cannot change your anxieties by changing your abode or country, or, we might paraphrase it, "by changing your outward circumstances."

Since the fear of the future has, as we have already said, always existed, and since ancient Greek religion —religion, I repeat—could find no remedy for it, the Greek philosophers and thinkers, by their moral systems, had to try to supply what the religion of their time could not give.

Thus, Plato and Aristotle sought to find happiness in understanding the universe and in realising man's moral and intellectual powers, and so to make nature and society means of self realisation. Such teaching no doubt helped the noblest souls in Greece, but it had no message for men as a whole. Later and conflicting teachings emanated from the schools of the Epicureans and Stoics. Epicurus taught that pleasure is " the only unconditional good, and pain the only unconditional evil,"[1] but thereby he did not mean profligate or sensual pleasure. " The root, from which (pleasure) springs," he taught, " and therefore the highest good, is intelligence,"[2] and man must secure serenity of mind in seeking the things within his reach, and making the best of the present. What we have to-day, we may lose to-morrow. Let us, therefore, he urged, enjoy the present. We are at ease to-day; to-morrow may bring pain and grief in its wake. Hence wise men, according to Epicurus, should enjoy the goods the passing hour provides, and meet without anxiety the troubles of the future. But there were probably few Epicureans of this purely prudential type. If it is hard to maintain a high standard of morals, it is probably as hard to maintain consistently a low standard. Epicurus declared that he could form no conception of the good apart from enjoyments.[3] Where there is no vision of the good, men drift inevitably downward, as they did, not only in Greece, where the ordinary man held no share in the divine life, but also in Palestine, where, as early as the eighth century, men of the same immoral or non-moral character embodied their principles in the words: " Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die " (*Is.* xxii. 13).

We may pass from such ignoble doctrines to those of the Stoics, whose teachers struck a loftier note. If things are not in our power, then we may conclude,

[1] Zeller, *Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics* (English Transl.), 474 *seq.*
[2] *Ibid.*, 476. [3] *Ibid.*, 478.

they taught, that they are neither good nor evil. Poverty and riches are mere accidents in life. If a man sinks into poverty, he is no worse: if he becomes rich, he is no better. Nor, in general, is it otherwise with adversity and prosperity, outward shame, or honour. We should only care for the things that are essentially part and parcel of our life, and under our own control. A man can always be courageous, the Stoics taught, true, just, and temperate. Virtue cannot be made and unmade by things outward. Hence, the virtuous man secures what is best in life; all else he should regard with indifference; the so-called ordinary evils of life are thus, according to the Stoics, not real evils.

This is noble teaching and, so long as the evils of life are still afar off, it is easy to profess it. But when these evils come, the human heart rejects Stoicism as a hard and helpless doctrine, as did the bulk of men in the days of even the greatest Stoics.

Let us now turn to the Master's teaching. Our Lord was no Stoic. He did not teach, as the Stoics did, that the common, and all but universal, sufferings of man are not real evils. He was subject to, and conscious of, fatigue in even a greater degree than His twelve disciples. He recognised hunger and thirst, and lack of clothing, and want of shelter, as real privations, and never taught that the wise man should regard them with indifference and as things of no account. Nay, His teaching was directly opposed to the Stoics in this respect, for He declared "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." That He set a just, and no more than a just, value on our human needs He showed by His own example: He was no ascetic. He quotes the wicked slander that His enemies set in circulation against Him. They call me, He states, "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber." From all this we infer that our Lord was Man and Perfect Man in all respects of

man's needs on earth, independently of the fact that He was the Son of God.

But, while our Lord frankly recognises man's sore needs as an evil, He teaches that we must not suffer ourselves to become the victims of such needs, however great these needs may be. For our Heavenly Father knoweth all these needs of ours, and, since He who feeds the birds and makes the flowers beautiful regards us as of infinitely greater worth than these, if we fulfil His will, or even in our very imperfect way strive to fulfil it, then He will see that our needs are satisfied, at least adequately to the tasks He calls us to fulfil. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then all else that you truly need, whether food, or raiment, or the far loftier needs of the human spirit, will be added unto you.

This is Christ's Gospel for men whose minds are filled with multitudinous cares, and whose hearts are wearied by anxieties for the morrow. This Gospel applies to every class and condition of life. It embraces every department of human life, here and elsewhere. It is not to be regarded as a mere means devised to comfort those for whom the pleasures of life are exhausted, and the mystery of death is looming on the horizon, though it has consolations for these also if they are fit to receive them. For Christ's religion concerns both time and eternity, and every event of man's life in time and eternity. Our chief and foremost task, therefore, is to do our Father's will. And it is our Heavenly Father's task to see to His children's needs.

This is the essence of true religion, and it is positively wrong to think that God is only concerned about our thoughts or speculations regarding Him, our worship, our ritual obedience, and not about the things that affect our inmost character. But even if such higher faith is ours, and yet we hold that only our spiritual, and not also our material, needs come within the immediate scope of His Providence, then

we are rejecting Christ's positive teaching in these essential aspects, and our failure of trust in God's ever-present help in these lower provinces cannot but finally deprive Christ's higher teaching of its essential power.

Men complain that the difficulties of life are insuperable. They often go further and arraign the justice of God, and say either that God is unjust or weak, or that there is no God. But no man who has sought God with all his heart can be of this opinion. For God is not responsible for all the evils of human life. It is not God alone that has had the shaping of the conditions of this life : He has created men to be fellow-workers with Him, and their part has been done very badly.

But our Heavenly Father's care for us does not always take the direction of our prayers, short-sighted as they so often are. Even Juvenal, the Roman poet, addressing his heathen contemporaries, writes that the gods have frequently destroyed whole families in compliance with the purblind and unreasonable prayers made on their behalf.

Christians are wiser, and know that God would not hearken to such prayers. Nevertheless, we must be prepared to meet difficulties and troubles—often many and dire—if we would be pupils in God's own school. All that is pure and true and noble in history is, directly or indirectly, the creation of suffering. Human character cannot enter into its fulness and its real splendour, save through the ordeal of affliction. Its inherent force cannot be realised, save in the face of resistance, nor the incomparable greatness of its freewill, except in the strife of fierce temptation. These are hard truths, but they must be faced and in some measure fulfilled. Even our Divine Master, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews writes, had to be made " perfect through suffering"; and again the same writer lays down the impressive truth that " it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren *in all things* . . . for in that He

Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." If this was true of the Master, can we doubt for a moment that all of us without exception must pass through God's school of discipline and affliction in our quest of His Kingdom and His righteousness, not only for our own sakes and the building up of a Christlike character in us, but also on behalf of our brethren; for amongst Christ's disciples there cannot be any real individualists, that is, persons who are only concerned for their own well-being, each looking only to save his own soul. And, if we are to help in saving the soul of a neighbour, it can only be done at a great cost. We are in a true sense our brothers' keepers.

Let us return more immediately to the words of Christ: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." What, my brethren, are you making the first object of your quest? Is it the good things of this world? If so, remember that there is nothing so sad as to witness a man toiling day and night for worldly success, and even achieving such success, and then, in the winter of his life, reaping the fruits of his labours. The false glamour of pleasure, of riches, of worldly honours, may blind him for a time to the tragedy of his life, and the utter worthlessness of the things for which he has bartered his soul. But if a man lives long enough, no worldly success can keep from him the consciousness of his real failure—neither fulness of estate, nor unbridled sensual indulgence, nor the amplest worldly honours. And if he does not recognise his failure now and here, the hour is approaching when the summons comes, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," and then he will learn that out of the prison house which he has himself created he cannot escape till he has paid the uttermost farthing. Sooner or later he cannot fail to recognise the tragedy of his

life. Be not, therefore, my brethren, like the muck-raker in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and make not the object of your quest a self-indulgent, sensual life, nor yet the attainment of this world's wealth, and power, and honours. Even if you seek them with all your heart, you have no assurance of ever attaining them. And, should you attain them, you will find, sooner or later, as we have already said, that they are mere illusions, destroyers of the true life that with God's help every true man can make his own. Make, then, the Kingdom of God and His righteousness the first object of your quest—first in time and first in importance—as the only good that can satisfy the heart and mind of man, and that in ever-growing fulness. No other interest may take precedence of this quest; for whatsoever comes between the soul and God must be sacrificed to this, the highest of all aims—whether pleasure, or gain, or social, or political, or literary distinction.

Now such a doctrine may seem to encourage fatalism or asceticism. But this is not really so. All that Christ requires of us is to follow the Divine order in our quest, and not our own order. The world is God's, and so we must realise in our daily life the eternal values of truth, and purity, and goodness, and love. So far from being ascetics, we are to do in the Christlike spirit the task God has committed to us, in the place He has assigned us, fulfilling every just claim our brethren have upon us, whether as parents, or husbands, or wives, or children, or neighbours, or citizens. Thus Christ has come that our lives may be filled with truth, and purity, and faith, and love, and that our highest motives may be the inspiration of our lowliest duties. *Only in the sphere of our ordinary everyday life, and in none other, can our faith win the assurance of its own reality.*

What then are we seeking? If we have not sought and found the Kingdom of God and His righteous-

ness, let us not adjourn the quest one moment longer. He that seeketh with his whole heart shall surely find. It may be that we have now and again sought the Kingdom of God, but have given up the struggle after some ineffectual efforts. If so, let us repent us of the abandoned strife, let us own our frequent cowardices and shameful conquests by temptation, let us rebuild the fallen purpose, and reconstruct with the help of God's Holy Spirit the high ideals of the Christian life, and realise them at all costs as each day passes, in all truth, and honour, and unselfishness, and love.

So, seeking we shall surely find, and when we have found in our inmost life that goodness is triumphant, though at a cost, we shall be more and more filled with the conviction that goodness is at the heart even of the outward world, and will sooner or later be triumphant there likewise. With our more resolute quest for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, we shall grow in intellectual integrity, that is, in making truth our supreme standard; in moral steadfastness, that is, in carrying out God's will in every department of life; and in spiritual insight and growth, that is, in an ever deepening communion with the Spirit of God. In so identifying ourselves with God's will, which often passes for folly with the wise of this world, we shall win the assurance that, however great be the numbers against us, one with God forms the true majority, and that His support makes our victory an ultimate and inevitable certainty.

THE RESURRECTION LIFE

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." *Col.* iii. 1.

BEFORE the Christian era, despair in manifold wise had given its sinister colouring to the thoughts and speculations of the wise among mankind. A sort of universal pessimism had seized on its leading thinkers and teachers. In Greece, before the dawn of speculative thought, the future life was painted in dark and forbidding colours. The writer of the *Odyssey* represents his hero Achilles in the underworld, when urged not to grieve for the upper life for that he was chief among the dead, as declaring: "I had rather be a serf, and serve a man without lot or inheritance, than be a king over the departed dead." And as the centuries sped onward a like darkness began to cloud the joyousness even of the present life. Sophocles in one of the grandest odes of Greek tragedy sings sorrowfully: "Never to be born were profit beyond count, but, being born, to go back at soonest whence man came were the next best thing by far."

In India Buddha taught that life in itself is an evil thing, and the prolongation of personal life beyond the grave an actual curse.

With the exception of Judaism and Zoroastrianism, all other pre-Christian religions found life a hard thing, a problem beyond solution, and ending in inevitable failure. Loss, anguish, despair, death, seemed to the most thoughtful to be the warp through which was woven the woof of human experience. The struggle seemed hopeless from the outset, and in the Prometheus and the Laocoon we

have set forth the fateful issues of human existence, in which, however heroic the defiance, the face of the combatant betrays slowly but surely the appearance of a deepening despair.

But in pre-Christian Judaism religious life and thought entered on more hopeful and assured paths leading to Divine reality. In their prophetic writings, psalms, and apocalypses, two elements which were later embodied in the Christian faith emerged, in very primitive forms indeed, but none the less real on that account. These had to do with the doctrine of a blessed future life, and of the Messiah. Now, as regards the first, it cannot but appear strange that belief in a blessed future life did not emerge in Israel till the fourth century B.C. or later, and that with the exception of a couple of psalms and a few passages in the later prophetic, or rather apocalyptic, writings, the whole of the Old Testament was written by inspired poets, prophets, and historians, who knew of no blessed communion with God save in this world, and who had to confess that they were only strangers and sojourners with God ; His guests, as it were, for a few years in this life, before they descended into the darkness of Sheol, the unblessed and final abode of all flesh, where, as the 88th Psalm declares, they were cut off from God's help and jurisdiction for ever. But the belief in a blessed immortality, though held only by a few of the faithful in the third century B.C., had come, by the beginning of the Christian era, to be a fixed article in the Creed of the chief religious parties in Judaism, though generally in very materialistic forms, which, unhappily, passed over into Christianity.

Jewish expectation of the Messiah came into being long before the belief in a blessed immortality. It assumed different forms in each prophetic writer. Though often nobly and spiritually conceived, the Messiah was generally represented as a triumphant world conqueror, and this conception of him was

never so firmly or so widely held in Palestine as at the beginning of the Christian era.

At last it seemed that the period of waiting was over, and that the long-expected Messiah had come in the person of the Prophet of Nazareth. But the Prophet of Nazareth who had come—not to satisfy the narrow claims of Judaism, but to manifest to all the world the true life and Being of God, even God's love for mankind from everlasting—could not lend Himself to the worldly rôle that the Jewish masses sought to thrust upon Him. The love of the Father for mankind could be manifested only through the death of the Son, and hence Good Friday is the greatest attestation of the love and suffering of God Himself.

But this life which Christ so surrendered for Divine ends could not be holden of death *even partially or for the smallest moment of time.* Death was an incident in the larger life, or, to change the figure, the gate by which He entered that larger life.

Thus Christ's Resurrection manifested the truth that in Him all the faithful of the past generations had already risen to a blessed life, as all the faithful of the coming generations will do, when once they pass through the gate of physical death. The Gospel of the Resurrection is the Gospel of hope, conquest, victory. When St. Paul wrote : " If ye be risen with Christ "—risen already, though still living on earth—" seek those things that are above," he called his Colossian readers to remember man's nature and man's destiny ; he summoned them to a heroic life, and, as a spur thereto, he woke them to self-reverence. But with self-reverence comes self-humiliation ; for when we have come to recognise the high truths and duties we have neglected, and the lofty possibilities we have forfeited, what is there for us but to cast ourselves in the dust in contrite sorrow, and make complete confession of our sin ? It is the thought of what we are and of what we

might have been that wakes to the full the anguish of our grief. But these very sorrows are a pledge of our still-abiding reverence for the ideal we have sinned against. Such deep contrition for the past and passionate aspiration for the future are effects of the working of the Divine Spirit within us, of the good hand of our God upon us, Who is resolved to claim us unto the uttermost, and haunt us with His reproaches, till we surrender ourselves unreservedly to His will, and do the works He hath appointed for us. Grief and self-humiliation are God's agents for rousing men to Christian action : this is their end and the purpose for which they are ordained. Hence there is danger *in prolonged and excessive sorrow* for sin, which may merely weaken the soul and make it the victim of remorse : each recurring burst of self-accusing grief serving only to dissipate the spiritual energy that should raise us into the quiet regions of Christian faithfulness, hope, and love : of that singleness of aim which issues in the doing of God's will, and the peace that follows inevitably thereon.

Throughout our entire life, it is true, the consciousness of humiliation can never be completely absent, for, if we have indeed risen with Christ, to us belong the contrite spirit and the humble heart which alone the voice of God can reach.

But to say that to us appertains the attitude of the contrite and humble is to tell only part of the truth. To us also belongs the spirit of the rejoicing and triumphant, the spirit of chastened self-reverence, the glad consciousness of high trusts and high possibilities, the lofty estimate of our being and destiny, that we are this day to stand and live, seeing that in some real measure we have already risen with Christ. Without such self-reverence and such high faith man cannot receive God's best wisdom. Great tasks cannot be achieved, great mountains of wrong and injustice cannot be removed, by the individual and the nation that are devoid of self-reverence and

of devout trust in the divineness of their destiny and mission.

On the truth that we have in some real measure risen with Christ we can stay our hearts; we can act in the living consciousness that, since our humanity is even now at the right hand of God, there is nothing too hard, nothing too high for us, and from the heart of this truth we can look forth on sin, and see its inherent weakness, on righteousness, and behold its all-conquering might.

How much the prophet and the reformer need this assurance that in some measure we have already risen with Christ: how it strengthens all true toilers for righteousness and humanity! For it is an assurance that truth is stronger than falsehood, that God is greater than the most gigantic wrongs, moral, social, or political, and that His righteousness, which is as the great mountains, will ultimately prevail.

In this faith each true servant of God goes forth to make his onset on evil. Soon, it may be, bleeding and faint, he learns that the time is short and the struggle long, and that he must fall before his spiritual ideals are achieved, or, mayhap, even acknowledged. But, if he be truly wise, he will only cling more closely to his allegiance and serve his Master with more disinterested devotion; and, like the prophets of old, like the heroes who lived not to witness the triumph of the cause for which they sacrificed their all, he too can die, die with Christ, content to have fought and laid down his life in his Lord's cause, assured that his efforts are not lost but are bearing their fruit in the eternal struggle against evil and wrong and sin.

It might seem that faith in the Risen Life can have little to do with the mean emergencies and petty trials of our ordinary everyday life.

But the faithful disciple knows that it is the commonplace life, more than any other, which needs the

ever-present power of the Risen Lord. The soul surrendered to the love of wisdom, of country, or of mankind, is redeemed in some measure from the self-centred and selfish life, and has in some degree died to self and risen to higher things; but, in ordinary circumstances, the soul of the average man, surrendered wholly to the small cares and interests of his calling, is in danger of becoming narrow and stunted, and of losing every grace of character through the attrition of mean experiences.

The only safe-guard against this danger is constant inspiration from on high: small duties can only be rightly performed by a soul surrendered to divine principles, and the loftiest truths are the only trusty guides in even the most trifling emergencies. The mind, then, must be set on things above: from the Lord Himself must be drawn the inspiration and power that are to transfigure the earthly life, and make its *necessary* relations, its *necessary* actions, constituents of a divine and eternal order. Into such an order no element of meanness or contempt can enter; the humblest lot which God arranges, the most self-effacing soul in which God vouchsafes to dwell, are forever raised above and beyond the sphere of human scorn. Such a soul, moreover, is delivered from the merely conventional standards of dignity and fitness: it can acknowledge nothing as mean, nothing as degrading, which bears the sacred name of duty, and thus it essays many a task from which lesser natures would hold back as unworthy of their high attainments.

The man whose affections are centred in Heaven regards his life as the instrument of divine ends, and can afford to lose this object or that without being affected in the main object of his life and action. Thus the changes and chances of life, which worry and confuse minds moving on a lower level, leave him, however deeply tried, still in possession of an undisturbed peace.

" Like some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

On the other hand, how many there are who, though recognising that the daily cares of life are not the sole object of their existence here, yet surrender their lives to such cares as though they were. Thus their lot becomes a slavery of unremitting toil and care, and, though they bewail life's interminable drudgery, they have all but unfitted themselves for using its freedom; self-made hewers of wood and drawers of water to mankind, they become the prey of petty anxieties; while insisting on some almost invisible points of economy, comfort, or conventional arrangement, they sacrifice the ends that give to life its real worth; and, amid the very circumstances arranged of God to elicit and discipline the spirit of the Risen Life, they come by degrees to quench that spirit altogether.

Such men have no protection against the daily disappointments and small vexations of life. If their work fail, they are without resource, and sink in despair amid the ruins of the world they have chosen as their own. And when their disappointments spring from the misconduct of others, their indignation knows no limit, and for the time sets reason and prudence at defiance.

And though their evil plight be confessed and deplored, their spirit still proves helpless in the face of the adversaries of its peace; for in all their strivings they fail to transcend the level of their trials; and so can find no refuge from self-reproachings, from the pride of man, and the strife of tongues. Without the faith that lifts the true, the risen, life heavenward, there can be no deliverance wrought through such self-strivings, and yet no escape from

their disquieting presence, except in the stagnation of spiritual death, when the struggle is *for the time* abandoned in despair, and the life surrendered to the evil it deplores.

Once more, this truth, that the divine principles of the Risen Life are the most efficient agents of life's humbler duties, is evident from the offices rendered by neighbourly kindness and service.

It might naturally seem that most attention would be paid to the ills and needs of the body by those who conceive the body to be their all: that the disciples of materialism would most abundantly minister to its wants, most tenderly wait upon its infirmities, and most affectionately soothe its declining years. But this is not so. Here again it is the mind that is set upon the things above, the Risen Life, that gives the most loving thought and service to the ills of man below, and the spirit that lives in Heaven that is the gentlest servant of man's most humiliating wants on earth.

Thus, for the inspiration and stay of the saint and hero, for the order and Christian temper of our homes, for the peace and mastery of our own minds, for the preservation of compassion and loving-kindness in our hearts, there is needed the reality of the Resurrection life—the life which in some measure belongs even to the weakest disciple in this world, and which has the assurance of an eternal growth in the world to come.

THE HARVEST OF THE FAITHFUL

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." *Gal.* vi. 7.

ACCORDING to the spirit with which men apply themselves to the tasks of life, life answers them—answers them after the ideals, or the idols, of their own heart. The same outward circumstances and trials of life which one man through his earthliness of spirit debases into the means of his own undoing, another through the divine life that is stirring within him transforms into spiritual agencies that lift him Godward. The harvests that are to be reaped from the toil of human hearts and human hands are but two: the harvest of the flesh, and the harvest of the Spirit. And the law that determines the relation of the sowing to the reaping is "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

But, before we go further, we should observe that it is only in the spiritual world, not in the material world, that this law holds with unalterable certainty.

1. In the first place, then, let us observe that there is no certainty attending aims confined wholly to this world.

The lower levels of our life are from time to time swept by destroying storms, which undo the careful labour of years. The merchant who has toiled a lifetime to amass a fortune may lose, through sudden mischance, or panic, or war, the fruits of all his industry and skill. The best-laid plans of a nation or of an individual to gain power, or fame, or wealth, or pleasure, may or may not be attended with success.

When a man's aims are bounded by the horizons of this world he pursues them in absolute uncertainty of ever achieving them: he may barter for them

uprightness of character and purity of heart, the very life and being of his soul, and yet fail in the end to secure the temporal gratification for which he has sacrificed all the true ends of life. Or, even granting that after such infinite sacrifices he has secured this precarious harvest, that he has sown to the world and reaped therefrom wealth, or high station, or merely a self-indulgent life, yet there is another and inevitable harvest, which he has not striven for, but which he has already begun to reap, and which he must sooner or later reap in its completeness.

But, though the individual can never reckon with certainty on attaining the purely earthly ends to which his efforts are directed, this is not true when the unit in the case is not an individual but a nation. Whatsoever a nation sows, spiritually or materially, that shall it also reap. For since the existence of the nation as a unit is confined to this world, it is but reasonable that it should meet in this world the due and complete reward of its actions and character.

History is in the long run simply a record of divine judgment. There is no natural necessity that a nation should ever grow decadent or old. If it does so, it is the result of its own vices. Nearly two thousand years ago a great Roman historian remarked that the Roman Empire was hastening to its destruction through the burden of its own evils. Possessing the possibility of unnumbered years, a nation reaps to the full all the good and all the evil that it has done, and, while by faithfulness to noble ends it can achieve, as it were, an immortality on earth, it may likewise through its selfish ambitions and vices bring about its own destruction.

But, turning aside from the consideration of this law in regard to the nation, let us devote our thought to the individuals of whom the nation is made up.

Leaving, then, out of sight the uncertain issues of human conduct when directed to earthly aims, let us

confine ourselves to those issues which are determined by definite and inexorable laws, dealing first with the retributions of wrongdoing, and secondly with the harvests of the righteous life. At the outset we cannot fail to remark the wonderful likeness between the sin and its natural penalty. This is a fact which is set forth in manifold ways in the New Testament. In our text we have "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." In 2 Cor. v. 10 we read that in the judgment men "shall receive the things done in the body." In 2 Peter ii. 12 of the Revised Version we have the striking words, "These shall in their destroying surely be destroyed, suffering wrong as the hire of wrongdoing," and more forcibly still in the marginal reading of the Revised Version of Col. iii. 25—"He that doeth wrong shall receive again the wrong that he hath done." In his parables our Lord repeatedly dwells on this kinship of the penalty to the sin. The unforgiving debtor is himself refused forgiveness. He who will not succour the poor shall himself become poor: the man who refuses to part with an offending eye or hand will finally lose his whole body in Gehenna.

It is easy likewise to trace the working of this law in the individual and social life.

Indolence leads to poverty, self-willed youth becomes the parent of fretful old age, the love of money begets every kind of meanness and unrest, and worldly self-content turns finally into apathy and world-weariness. Sense avenges the sins of sense, and thence we have the tyranny of long-indulged desire, the torment of appetites that lust, and passions that burn, when the means of gratification and power of enjoyment are for ever gone. Offences against the moral instincts of society are visited with exclusion or disgrace—the liar is condemned to distrust, treachery is attended with scorn, selfishness is chastised with isolation, the nemesis of pride is the loss of human sympathy. Thus

in manifold wise he that hath done wrong receives again the wrong that he hath done.

But there is another feature in such penalties that demands consideration, namely, the fact that every offence against truth and righteousness and love is punished simultaneously with its commission by some loss of the spiritual life and by some blinding of the spiritual vision : the words " in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die " are true of every deliberate transgression from the *spiritual* standpoint. The sin is hardly committed when the spiritual penalty begins to take effect.

But, notwithstanding the certainty of such divinely ordained penalties, they suffer from one most striking defect, and this is that they are in a great measure unconsciously incurred, and, however appalling they may appear to the observer, they often fail to awake any sense of shame or demerit in the offender himself. This insufficiency of the spiritual penalty is recognised by human law, and it is for this very reason that human law steps in with its positive inflictions to supplement the defects of spiritual penalties, and to turn unconscious wrong-doing into conscious sin and shame.

What, moreover, may seem a further weakness is the slowness with which retributive penalty takes *outward* effect, but this is in reality a merciful appointment of God, an appointment necessary also to the attainment of the purpose of life in this world—the formation of character, the divine education of man. Now if men are to be divinely educated they must be free to act ; they must have opportunities for right, as well as for wrong, doing. Accordingly, if at the very moment an evil purpose was conceived, or an evil deed executed, a dread and awful penalty were to descend in its completeness on the offender, true freedom of choice would for the most part be suspended, fright would paralyse the action of conscience, and compulsion destroy the possibilities of

freedom. That full retribution is late in taking effect is therefore a merciful ordination of God and likewise helpful to the spiritual well-being of men; even though the ill-doer takes advantage of it to encourage himself in his evil ways, and, as the Hebrew writer of old declared, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

But, though the outward fulfilment of the sentence be deferred, there is no uncertainty as to its ultimate execution. There is a Spanish proverb which puts this truth very forcibly in the following pregnant words: "Though God does not pay at the end of each day, in the end God pays." There is no uncertainty as to the ultimate execution of divine judgment. From its very slowness it is but gathering force to strike down the offender, whether an individual or a nation, with surer aim and heavier retribution. Every secret sin shall meet with its due condemnation, and, though hand join in hand, the open transgressor will receive no help or countenance from his associates in sin, however multitudinous they may be. The law of divine requital in each instance seeks out the offender, under whatever majorities, confederacies, unions, or guilds he would shelter himself, and, sooner or later, drags him before the bar of conscience, or the tribunal of Heaven, declaring unto him "Thou art the man."

Many men seek to palliate their spiritual treason by dwelling on the unsettled nature of opinion, on the encroachments that science has made on the ancient domain of faith, on the assaults of philosophy and criticism on much that our fathers reverenced and loved. But this is surely the dishonesty of men who devise new excuses for old sins.

For to all who seek to know the power of thought and science there is boundless opportunity therein for learning to think God's thoughts after Him, to find that to know Him is eternal life, and that His

service is perfect freedom; for from the beginnings of time the revelation of God has in every age been growing larger, and, especially in these later days, this larger growth is manifest in great books and great examples; in the sifted wisdom of the ages, in the wider sweep and deeper insight of Christian helpfulness, in the closer fellowship of all faithful men. Even from the stress and storm of the late world-shaking war, with its tumults and confused noise and garments rolled in blood, the nations are learning —very slowly indeed, but surely—that it is God's will that International Law should be established, and that each nation should do to neighbouring nations what it would that they should do unto it.

The dawn of divine revelation is slowly broadening into the noontide light of day, and the sunshine of God's truth and presence is being shed around our lives, if we have but eyes to see. But, if this sunshine fail to light up our inner life, it is because we have made the darkness of self-will our home, and the thick darkness of sin our dwelling-place. Yet all the same, according to the measure of light given to us will our responsibility be judged in that day of reckoning to which the flight of time draws us slowly but irresistibly onward. We may scoff at the prophets that arraign our unfaithfulness, we may silence for the moment the voices that proclaim our degradation, we may resist all the messengers of God which He hath sent, rising up early and sending them, but we cannot thereby check the advancing footfall of inexorable retribution, or bid that ascending sun stand still below the horizon, which is hasting to usher in our day of doom.

But, though it is fitting to dwell on the ultimate issues of conduct, it would be treason to the truth of things to divert our thoughts from the importance of to-day to some far-off judgment; to account the present as only a time of sowing, and the future only one of reaping. This would be the gravest

misconception both of the present and the future. For we are every day sowing and reaping, every day entering on new crises of life through God's judgments on our past actions. *We are to-day what our past has made us*, and for the spirit of that past we are individually accountable. If we have sown in that past a spirit of selfwill and selfishness, let us not be astonished that we are reaping this day a heart unshocked at its own hardness, a spirit smitten with spiritual incapacity, and dead in trespasses and sins. Men are always entering on the consequences of past actions, and are always reaping the harvests of past sowings, and this we may see in our own lives, and in the lives of those around us.

The young man who applies himself to business, resolved above all to make money and advance himself, may do so without having at the outset any thought of being untrue, unchristian; but since he makes this his first desire, and gives himself to this present world with all his heart and soul and strength, with advancing years his generous impulses and noble enthusiasms begin to die away, his selfish instincts crush out of existence his yearnings after a better life: he grows mean, sordid, and close-fisted, and, when, as he ages, be becomes a prey to restlessness and idolatrous greed, he is but reaping the harvest he has sown.

Another gives himself over to small vanities, and frivolous amusements, only to reap in later years pettiness of soul, and a spirit emptied of all earnestness and truth.

Another lives in a world of thrilled nerves and furious passion, till, in the end, he reaps a harvest of exhausted energies and drear satiety.

Another sows the seed of an unchastened spirit and gradually loses all self-control, till at last his impatience, irritability, and irrational sensitiveness to injury prove a curse to himself and to all who have dealings with him.

The youth who indulges in thoughts and fancies the acknowledgment of which could not fail to overwhelm with shame, is, however unconsciously, undermining the strength of his Christian manhood, and yielding himself to the Delilahs of the imagination, who will deliver him, like Samson shorn of his might, an easy prey to actual temptation. The seeds of shameful thought have in due course borne their harvest of impure and shameless life.

In these and like instances, sowing unto the flesh results in a harvest of spiritual loss and shame and sin: we reap in every instance what we have sown; there is not a single evil thought, or word, or action, which does not bear fruit both for time and eternity; we cannot escape the consequences of our actions—we are this day exactly what our past has made us; and he that hath sown unto the flesh is this very moment of the flesh reaping corruption.

2. It is now our task to show that the aims of the man who is striving to live the Christian life will assuredly be achieved, both here and hereafter. Of course, this does not hold of such aims as are directed to anything short of pure goodness. For only too often in good men aims of a lower and unspiritual type are intermingled with the spiritual aims to which their lives are really surrendered. Now so far as a man's conduct springs from such lower aims it cannot, of course, be called Christian. So far as we seek God not for His ends but for our own we cannot look to have our expectations honoured in God's Kingdom of the pure, the true, the unselfish, and the self-forgetful. The aim of the man who is really striving to be good is to advance in goodness, and to find his blessedness in his growing likeness to his Father in Heaven. As for his worldly comfort, well-being, advancement, however much and legitimately he may desire these, he can leave them trustfully in his Father's hands; for though all such secondary things fail, he is assured that

the power to serve God can never fail, and he knows from his own experience that God never rejects those who truly love Him.

The aims of the righteous life are fulfilled here and hereafter, and herein the law "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap" is absolute.

This we may see in a man's relations to his life's calling and to his fellow men.

(1) Our life's calling is given us by God to be for us a spiritual education, and to shape our characters in growing likeness to some divine ideal, some thought of God. Each calling has its own definite teaching to impart, its own particular element of the divine life to draw forth and fashion in us: and in the meanest calling that God has made necessary for man there is room for the best instruction of Heaven, for the conquest of greed within us, for the control of our unruly tempers, for the cultivation of truth, for the exercise of humility and of unselfish love. But to fulfil these ends we must live our life from its divinest motives. We must sow unto the spirit. And if we sow unto the spirit, we shall reap a character ever growing in courage, in patience, in strength, in self-mastery, in tenderness, in humility in love, and thus, even here, we shall experience the blessedness of the life eternal.

But if, on the other hand, from the doing of our daily tasks we reap irritability, loss of self-control, uncharitableness, suspiciousness, hardness of heart, lowness of aim, love of power as power, covetousness, ambition, we may gather infallibly that therein, unless we are suffering from some mental disability, we have sown not to the spirit, but to the flesh. But to those who, despite many a personal short-coming and many a failure, are striving to discharge their calling as unto God, and not unto men, every discovery of personal unfaithfulness to Christ, of failure in loyalty to the Divine Master, becomes a fresh summons to a deeper purity of motive;

self-knowledge will, through the grace of Christ, become a means of self-deliverance, and every sin against our Christian ideal will issue in a new and purer devotedness, deepened by the remembrance of past unfaithfulness, and guarded henceforth with a loyalty that sooner or later must become a veritable passion of the spirit.

In the lives of those who can learn wisdom from their own failures how often do we see the tares steadily disappear and the good grain gradually ripen, how often do we see the conceit, impatience and self-assertion, so frequent and natural in youth, displaced by the humility, self-control, and self-respect of Christian manhood, the sins of youth by the Christian virtues of maturer years; in short, we see the fulfilment of the law "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

(ii) And the action of this law is still more manifest in a man's relations with his fellow-men; for there is an infinite fruitfulness in all true godliness of heart, spirit being born of spirit, as life is born of life. To personal faithfulness, to the spiritual travail of the individual soul, God has committed the spread of His Kingdom on earth, and whatsoever a man soweth unto that kingdom shall he also reap. From the life of God's faithful servant influences stream forth continually, ministering to man's help and to man's salvation, and such a life grows richer in the measure in which it gives itself away, whether or no those to whom it is given be grateful for the gift.

It would be sad indeed if it was only when we sowed in responsive natures that a larger harvest was garnered in our own : if only when men were grateful for our help that they could quicken us spiritually in return. But this is so far from being true, that the law of sowing and reaping holds even in our dealings with the most unresponsive natures.

Even when we are misunderstood, and our

overtures of help rejected, when our labour of love is unappreciated, and our gifts, intellectual or other, are met with suspicion, we have therein exactly the discipline we need to teach us a true, or a truer, unselfishness. At all events, when rejection irritates, and ingratitude closes our kindliness of heart, when we put forward deceived trust and abused generosity in the past to justify our indifference to the crying needs of men in the present, then we may be assured that the love we sought to convey to our neighbour was not free from the alloy of selfish motives, that the seed we sowed was not unmingled with tares, and that our self-centred feelings and callousness of heart are the harvest of corruption we are reaping from the seed sown to the flesh.

The life that has failed to save the soul for which it has laboured and given itself reaps from its self-devotion fresh stores of the grace which it has failed to develop in the unresponsive heart, and grows in diviner likeness to its Lord in the measure of the sacrifices it is called upon to make. Every failure in helping our neighbour teaches the heart a truer insight, a wider charity. The very waywardness of self-willed childhood and the sins of reckless and prodigal youth are often the only means of unsealing the deeper fountains of a parent's love and self-forgetfulness; and the tender spirit is often schooled into a truer tenderness by its unavailing efforts to influence the drink-sodden life beside it. But, even when we have seemed to fail, we have no just grounds for concluding that we have really failed, with the souls that have already passed the bounds of time. They that go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall, sooner or later, either here or elsewhere, find, to their joy, a harvest far beyond their deservings, nay, more, beyond their utmost desires. It is these seeming failures, and not our seeming successes, that draw out the divinest things in man.

It was the sharpness of ingratitude, and the apparent failure of a life's devotion, that lifted Moses to the greatest height of self-sacrifice possible in his day, when in an agony he prayed for rebellious Israel, "if Thou wilt not forgive their sin, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book." It was the love that appeared to have been lavished in vain, the sacrifices made for naught, the life's labour in Israel's behoof rejected and lost, that wrung from the apostle of the Gentiles that cry of completest self-effacement ever heard on earth: "I would that I were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake."

Thus, my brethren, if we sow to the spirit, if we set our affections on things above, if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then success and failure, praise and blame, life and death, time and eternity, will but serve to advance us further in the blessed life—the life that is not only un-ending, but also ever growing richer in purity and truth and usefulness and power throughout the growing ages of eternity.

THE SOUL'S CRY FOR SALVATION

" Sirs, what must I do to be saved ? " *Acts* xvi. 30.

THE words before us indicate a state of mind that at one time or other every man has experienced in some degree. The question, therefore, is a common question, but never a commonplace one.

It marks the awakening of the soul, a consciousness that something is wrong within us, that somehow we have strayed from the right path, somehow have missed the true ends of life, in which alone our nature could find satisfaction. This awakening may come through the most conflicting experiences—through joy or sorrow ; through reproach, or through unmerited approbation ; through the censure of a foe or the kindly admonition of a friend ; through some flagrant sin, or a more immediate vision of the goodness and love of God. And thus the soul, catching some glimpse of its own deep disorder, is filled with trouble and unrest, and seeks for deliverance, now in this direction, now in that. And every good resolution formed, every transgression truly deplored, every attempt to combat evil habits and live a better life, are signs and tokens of a soul seeking silently yet resolutely the way that leadeth to salvation. At times the soul's longing becomes importunate, and bursts into expression in some such earnest appeal as that in our text, " Sirs, what must I do to be saved ? " Now this cry may arise from the mere surface of our life, and so may have no living, no organic, connection with the supreme and ruling desire of our hearts ; but, when it does spring from the real depths of our being, it seeks—not for escape from the penalty or punishment of sin, but for deliverance from sin itself, and from the self-reproach and self-reprobation that,

sooner or later, deliberate wrong-doing inevitably entails on the offender.

This sense of sin is no mere survival of some outgrown period in our savage ancestry, which, according to the teaching of some extreme socialists and anarchists, is an anachronism in the present day, and must finally vanish in the growing light of knowledge and civilisation. This theory has been adopted at various periods on a national scale in the history of the world and put into practice, but with a terrible nemesis. France learned this to her cost a hundred years ago. And now Russia is repeating the experiment on a still more gigantic scale, and its government, bereft of all conscience and plunging into ever deeper guilt, is marching through bloodshed and infamy to the hour of its disillusionment and doom.

The consciousness of sin is no outgrown survival of the past. Nay, rather, it is the sign of all signs that man is advancing mentally, morally, and spiritually. It is an experience that will grow deeper with the growing years, and will never be absent from the experience of the seekers after goodness and the seekers after God.

For with every forward step in civilisation, with every larger apprehension of the moral links that bind every man to his fellows, with every advance in spiritual light and truth and the knowledge of God, the possibilities not only of faithfulness, but also of unfaithfulness, are multiplied and enlarged: so that, if, on the one hand, man becomes capable of rising to Godlike emotions, acts, and ideals; on the other, he becomes equally capable of demoniacal lusts and hatreds and infamies. The sense of sin is one of the most certain facts of our experience, and can neither be ignored, nor reasoned away.

But this sense of sin, though a grievous burden, is yet a burden that is fraught with blessing. For it is the sure and unmistakable sign that divine light and truth are stirring within us, that a conflict is being

waged in our hearts which is one and the same with the great conflict that is being waged throughout the universe at large, between light and darkness, between God and the adversaries of all goodness. This sense of sin is absent only from those who have not yet risen to a definite consciousness of God and of their own souls, or, having done so, have been disobedient to the heavenly vision and become spiritually dead, dead in trespasses and sins.

Whilst men are in this condition of spiritual death they are quite self-satisfied. Though they may be bad and vicious, they are quite content to be bad and vicious. Though they may be self-indulgent, dishonest, cruel, false, malicious, their infamies cost them no pangs of conscience; for they are morally and spiritually dead. On the other hand, there are hosts of men who are free from these obvious sins, and who, comparing themselves with such glaring offenders, feel satisfied with themselves, and not without some reason. And yet—and yet, the man who is self-satisfied is easily satisfied; for no man who is really striving to do his duty to God and to his neighbour can be satisfied with his achievement of it. Carlyle, in a well-known passage in his *Sartor Resartus*, exclaims: "Happiness of an approving conscience! Did not Saul of Tarsus call himself the chief of sinners, and Nero of Rome, jocund in spirit, spend much time in fiddling?" Self-satisfaction on the part of any man can only spring from an abysmal blindness to his true condition. For the sorrow of a conscience once awakened besets not only the great offenders against humanity: it besets every man who thinks of the tender grace of days and possibilities that are now beyond recall, it besets every man who has turned his back on the duties that God has laid upon him to home and kin and country, it besets every man who has bartered his soul to win some worldly pleasure, or prize, or gain, every man who has chosen systematically the comfortable, and often

respectable, line of least resistance, and now compares his achievement and his character with what he might have done, and with what he might have been. The conscientious man can never be self-satisfied.

In his *Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan aptly names the self-satisfied character Mr. Ignorance, and describes this personage as confidently anticipating a welcome in Heaven, whereas the true pilgrims are represented as often well-nigh hopeless from the consciousness of their infirmities and sins.

When, therefore, under the stress of the sense of sin the smitten heart cries out, What must I do to be saved? what answer does the New Testament give? Now the New Testament does not give one answer, but many answers; the answers correspond to the spiritual condition of the seekers, and accordingly differ in every case. In fact, in each individual case in the New Testament the attention of the seeker was drawn to some definite, intelligible act, and the command given: This do: and the task enjoined was always the most irksome to the natural man, a task that revealed to him his real unreadiness and unwillingness for the law of God; it was also one which he could not possibly misunderstand.

Let us consider some of the answers given by John the Baptist, when the people came asking him what they should do to prepare themselves for the coming Kingdom of God.

To the tax-gatherers who asked, "What shall we do?" John replied, "Exact no more than that which is appointed to you." John here places his hand on the very plague spot in their character. These men were notoriously unjust and fraudulent, and, backed by the power of imperial Rome, had unbounded opportunities for oppressing the defenceless Jews.

And to the soldiers that came asking, "What shall we do?" John gave such a reply as at once brought home to them the special sins of which they

were guilty. They were fierce and brutal. John bids them " Do violence to no man." They often falsely accused the innocent of sedition and treason, since part of the goods of the accused fell to the share of the informers and executioners. John tells them " Accuse no man falsely."

To the sleek Pharisees, the popular saints of Judaism, John issues the words of solemn warning: " Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit will be hewn down and cast into the fire."

You will observe that John gave each class something definite to do. In no case did John ask them if they were good Churchmen and loyal observers of the Jewish festivals. He made no enquiries as to their orthodoxy or heterodoxy. He did not require them to rehearse their creed, or describe their spiritual experiences and emotions. He simply laid his hand on the evil that was corroding their character, and, commanding them to forego the wrong they had been committing, he required them to give themselves to the right they had been ignoring. If their repentance led them to a new life, it was a true repentance ; if not, it was worse than useless.

John's teaching of repentance was good as far as it went, but there was an irreparable weakness in it. It could appeal only to the best among his hearers. How were the weaker penitents to maintain the spiritual level they had for the moment attained ? Did John's teaching provide them with a spiritual dynamic which, entering into their lives, could not only sustain them on the higher level they had already won, but also enable them to climb the still greater heights, which the ever fresh calls of God would constrain them to surmount ? As regards such a dynamic John practically declares : I cannot provide you with it. It was a confession that something was lacking in Judaism.[1] For this dynamic John

[1] iv. Ezra is a confession to this effect. The Law could only appeal to a small minority of mankind.

refers his disciples to Him that would come after him. "I baptise you with water: but He that cometh after me shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

When we pass from John's method of dealing with religious enquirers to that of our Lord and His apostles, the case of the rich young man at once presses itself on our attention. When this young enthusiast came running and cast himself at Christ's feet and said, "Good Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" our Lord at once replied briefly, definitely, and imperatively, "Sell all that thou hast and come . . . follow Me."

This stern requirement brought the young man straightway to a knowledge of himself, and made him conscious, perhaps for the first time in his life, that his supreme desire was not to inherit eternal life, but to have riches and wealth and comfort—in a word, to have a good time of it from his own particular standpoint.

Another Galilean, who professed discipleship but was putting off its claims to a more convenient season, namely, till he had buried his father and mother, was promptly and peremptorily bidden to leave father and mother and follow the Master.

Still another Galilean—the healed demoniac—who prayed that he might follow his new-found Lord, was forthwith appointed to a special sphere of duty, and bidden to return to his own people and proclaim what good things God had done for him.

In the Pauline Epistles the same method is followed. The Corinthians are exhorted to abandon their idolatry and fornication: the Ephesians to be no longer drunken with wine: the liar to put away his lying: he that stole to steal no more, and the jailer in our text, the servant of imperial Rome, is bidden to believe in the crucified Nazarene, and to cast in his lot with the despised and persecuted followers of Christ.

Thus in every instance a definite and intelligible act or duty was prescribed, and the nature of the duty varied with the spiritual condition of the seeker after salvation. But the fulfilment of the prescribed duty was always to be followed by the fulfilment of the further commandment of the Master, "Follow Me"—a commandment which, if fulfilled, had in it the promise of endless progress.

Let us observe further in this connection that no value is set on the feelings by our Lord or by His apostles. When Peter, in a burst of enthusiastic emotion, declared that he was ready to go with his Master even unto death, Christ showed how little He esteemed such emotional religion by the solemn warning: "Before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny Me thrice," and St. Paul warns the self-satisfied against impending fall, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." And yet there are men and women—and those not a few—in all the Churches whose sole evidence for their Christianity is some play of feeling or emotion under the influence of ritual, or of religious music, or impassioned preaching. But religious raptures and emotions which do not lead on to true repentance and active faithful service, which do not end in the reformation of character, are merely so much waste of spiritual power: in themselves they possess no essential element of religion and are no better than a delusion to those who cherish them.

But not all who professedly seek salvation seek it whole-heartedly: many do so with certain reservations: they are ready to make a partial, not a complete, surrender to the claims of Christ. Herein lies the great tragedy of many lives. The desire for salvation is not the supreme desire, but only a secondary one. This spiritual condition is described by St. Paul in terms that set forth the experience of all men who are struggling after truth and righteousness: "What I would, that I do not;

but what I hate, that do I." This double-mindedness has found classic expression in the Confessions of St. Augustine. "The new will," he writes, "which I began to have was not yet strong enough to overcome the other will, strengthened as it was by long indulgence. So these two wills . . . contended with each other and disturbed my soul. . . . Still bound to earth, I refused, O God, to fight on Thy side, as much afraid to be freed from all bonds, as I ought to have feared to be fettered by them. . . . There was nought in me to answer to Thy call . . . for I was afraid Thou wouldst hear me too soon and heal me at once of the disease of lust, which I wished to satiate rather than to have extinguished."[1]

An Indian mystic of the present day confesses the same spiritual experience in the following words: "My debts are large, my failures (are) great, my shame (is) secret and heavy: yet when I come to ask for good, I quake lest my prayer should be answered."[2]

So long as a man's desire for salvation is not single-hearted and wholehearted, he is afraid that he might be answered, and robbed of the opportunity of further indulgence in his pleasant vices. But if a man's desire to serve God is supreme above his other desires, then that desire is certain of satisfaction, and it is the only desire that has such a certainty, whether in this, or in any other, world.

But let us well observe that the question, "What must I do to be saved?" is one not merely for the beginner in the Christian life, but one which fitly and essentially belongs to every stage of our Christian progress. We are here in a condition of salvation. "We are being saved." Our salvation is not completed till our entire nature is redeemed—till all our impulses, affections, purposes and actions move in harmony with the will of God. Measured by this

[1] *Confessions of St. Augustine*, viii. 5, 7.

[2] Quoted from Saunders' *Adventures of the Christian Soul*, p. 76.

standard it is manifest that we are all at the best but imperfect Christians, or, in other words, some part of our nature is not yet brought into obedience to Christ.

And thus comes about the strange result that we are in reality under two different dominions. So far as our nature is redeemed and saved, so far are we under grace; but so far as we strain or rebel against the will of God, so far are we still under law, feeling it to be a hard taskmaster enforcing its claims upon us, and visiting our disobedience with its inevitable penalties. Every thought and desire, every word and deed that lie outside the will of God are so many testimonies that, so far at least, we are not yet saved, that, so far, we do not yet believe in Christ. And thus there are good men that are wanting in straightforwardness; there are others that are self-willed and passionate: there are others that are sullen and unforgiving: others with some element of the coward and craven, others that are greedy of gain: others whose givings to their brethren in need are but as the crumbs that fall from the table of their self-indulgence. Now these and such-like qualities often co-exist with genuine godliness in other respects; but conflicting elements cannot always exist side by side; if the evil is not in due time driven out, it will become paramount, and expel the good, and destroy the man both soul and body.

The desire for salvation must be wholehearted if it is to be satisfied. But even when the desire is wholehearted, the thing itself—salvation—has different meanings for different souls, and the words "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" may mean anything—from a mere deliverance from the selfish fears and anxieties besetting the human heart, to the full-orbed transformation of man's entire nature in Christ. Let us take these two extreme examples of men seeking for salvation, and the lower first. In the hour of conflict and passion,

the poorest, weakest, most erring, son of man can be delivered from his fears and given peace in the assurance of God's forgiveness in Christ: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved"; for Christ is nothing less than the manifestation of God Himself. We are, my brethren, to believe nothing of God save what Christ has revealed Him to be—namely, our heavenly Father, gracious and merciful, infinite in compassion and loving-kindness, and able and desirous to save unto the uttermost all that come unto Him through Christ. We learn, moreover, in such experiences of deliverance, that God is always gracious and forgiving, and cannot be otherwise, in this, and in all, ages, in this, and in all, worlds.

Now to this man salvation means, first and chiefly, deliverance from the shame and anguish, the guilt and penalties of sin. But to the other man salvation is something incomparably greater. It is not first and chiefly a deliverance from the pains and penalties of sin: nay, rather, it is a deliverance from sin itself and a growth unto likeness to Christ and nothing less. Hence, this man seeks Christ not only as the refuge of his weakness, as we all must do from time to time, but as the educator of his strength; and Christ's religion is not for this man, as for the first, a sort of spiritual ambulance, that, passing through the busy ways of men, picks up the weaklings and the helpless, the wounded and the disabled. Christ's religion is rather the pillar of fire leading on an armed host to victory, quickening them with the courage of their Divine Leader, and inspiring them with an ever-growing devotion to the cause of goodness and of God. Hence, in this case, the words, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," assume a deeper significance. Here we have in its most effective form the expulsive power of a new and divine affection, that is, the supreme love in man's soul for goodness and for God. For the right

way of overcoming a wrong affection or tendency is not simply to act on the defensive against it, but to expel the intruder by a new and stronger affection—stronger in fact than all the wrong affections that the enemy can inspire. And this new affection is a passionate devotion to Christ, which strengthens the will, cleanses the unclean heart, expels every self-centred and predatory ambition, quickens every noble and chivalrous feeling, and spurs on the man to ever higher achievements and ever higher ideals in Christ. Herein Christ's righteousness becomes man's—not through what is falsely called an imputed righteousness, but through an actual transformation of the man through personal surrender and obedience to Christ, and belief in Christ is the never-failing source and inspiration of such obedience.

To the man who resolutely enters on the path of obedience to Christ the way is generally at the outset rough and grievous: Christ's yoke seems a burden too heavy to be borne. But by and by in God's own good time—it may be in one transcendent moment, or it may be in the course of many years, God lifts the soul into oneness with Him, and the hard service is converted into a passionate devotion. The law of God is no longer a hard taskmaster acting from without, but is enthroned in the heart within. Thus from being slaves in the Kingdom of God we are transformed into sons, and that in God's own household. This gift is bestowed somewhere on the path—at its outset, in the course of it, or at its close.

In conclusion, my brethren, the duty of earnestness and single-heartedness in the Christian life is ever incumbent upon us, whatever be our attainments therein: the duty of bringing deed after deed, word after word, thought after thought, into glad obedience to the Lord who has redeemed us, till our whole life and faith rest in Him. Then—and not till then is our salvation perfected—the object for which Christ came.

THE CERTAINTY OF THE FAITHFUL SEEKER

" And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove ! Then would I fly away, and be at rest." *Ps.* lv. 6.

THESE words of the Psalmist express feelings that are familiar to all of us that have passed beyond the years of childhood. We have all had our seasons of depression in which our thoughts have naturally expressed themselves in some such self-pitying cry.

The hermits of the East, the anchorites of the desert, the troubled souls that in all ages have sought a refuge in convents, monasteries and retreats—all alike have shared the same trouble of heart as ourselves ; and if our lives have taken different directions from theirs, it is not that our impulses or natures are different, but that our conceptions of duty have changed. In the lives of all men there are hours when they long for the imagined refreshment and rest of the desert ; hours when, bowed down by the sense of their own sins and shortcomings, or disheartened by their ineffectual efforts to help the helpless around them, they are for the moment overwhelmed by an inrush of despair, and the cry goes up from the depth of their despondent hearts—

" Oh that I had wings like a dove !
Then would I fly away, and be at rest."

But in all faithful men such a longing must remain a longing and nothing more. It can be tolerated only as a sickness of the soul, which may not, nay, which must not, be indulged : else the momentary sickness may become a chronic disease, and paralyse every spiritual energy.

So we rightly condemn this desire of the Psalmist

—a desire which he renounces later in the same psalm when he declares: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (lv. 22).

This desire of the Psalmist, therefore, is not a legitimate one. But this conclusion naturally suggests the question: Has man any legitimate desires? Of course he has. To possess desires is an imperative need in man, not merely if he is to live well and nobly, but if he is to live at all.

In using the word legitimate we exclude from our consideration all objects of desire which are confessedly wrong. So far as a man makes wrong objects the goal of his efforts, so far he has declared himself the foe of goodness and of God, and gone over with his gifts, whether great, mediocre, or infinitesimal, to the kingdom of outer darkness. The persistence in such a course brings with it a sure nemesis: sooner or later, the result of a life of evil desire and undeviating wrongdoing is a soul lost to humanity, to goodness, and to God.

But, putting aside such desires as are confessedly wrong, we may roughly divide legitimate desires into two classes: desires which are merely temporal; desires which are spiritual.

Now, while it is true that every man should, since he is a citizen of two worlds—a temporal and a spiritual, cherish desires both temporal and spiritual, it is just as true that, whereas some men's first and chief desires are directed to things temporal, other men's first and chief desires are directed to those that are spiritual.

Let us now consider the first class, which embraces all those whose chief desires are directed to things of this world. That man should have desires is a right, nay, a necessary, thing, as we have already recognised; for there can be no progress in commerce and industry, in science, in art, in knowledge, in civilisation, in morals, or religion, without desires.

To possess desires is an imperative need of life itself. Now the things of this world are of very unequal moral worth; and hence it follows that as men differ from each other in their desires, they differ in their moral standards. One man makes money his chief desire, another material comfort, another power, another science or knowledge, another art or music, another patriotism, another philanthropy.

Now it is clear that men differ essentially from each other according to the objects which they set before them; and further, it is equally clear that none of these objects can ultimately satisfy the soul of man. If, whilst directing his efforts to one or other of these objects, he has failed to make the Kingdom of God and His righteousness his chief and paramount aim, then, whether he succeed or fail in his limited ambitions, he will, should he live only long enough, inevitably experience the sickness of a disillusioned heart, his highest attainment will bring no lasting satisfaction, nor will his supremest success, even if he does succeed, bring any permanent element of peace.

The quest for satisfaction in the things of this world and its ever-recurring failure have led to effusions in all ages on the deceptiveness of human life. In fact, our earthly life is declared to be an entire illusion, a scene of baffled hopes and assured disappointment. But, so far as this is true, it is men themselves that have made it so; for God has placed the issues of life and death in men's own hands. Every day men are deliberately choosing the line of least resistance, every day deliberately setting their chief desire on some temporal object or ambition at the cost of some spiritual attainment, and then, when they meet with the unavoidable checkmate of their hopes, they cry out against the injustice of God and man, and blame every one but themselves for the inevitable consequences of their own unfaithfulness.

However often the bitter lesson is driven home to the hearts of men, the rising generations always need to learn it afresh. The child longs for freedom from the restraints that beset it on every side: the youth longs for the tasks, responsibilities, and independence of manhood: but for the man who has fully entered on these the horizon has again shifted, and the vision that promised so much to the child, to the youth, and to the man, has already receded so far into the distance, that with multitudes the hope of any true blessedness is relinquished in despair. This is the destiny of all those whose chief aim and end are the temporary satisfactions of this world, and not the things of the Kingdom of God. Their hopes are built on wrong foundations. The only foundations on which we have a right to build are those that are spiritual. And if we build on such foundations, the edifice we rear thereon will not, like the things of this world, be flung in due course as waste upon the rubbish heaps of time, but will be a spiritual building, a house not made with hands, as assured as God's own existence, as lasting as eternity.

But the lesson is one that is hard to learn, and man is at the best but a slow and backward pupil in the school of God.

In trouble he reverts to the old delusion and prays for the wings of a dove that he may fly into the wilderness and be at rest—a vain attempt; for the sorrows of a mind that is not stayed on God, and the griefs that obsess a faithless heart, cannot be cured by any change of place, or by fleeing the tasks that rightly devolve upon it. Impure passion, covetousness, and ambition, like other evil desires, are ever on the wing: they set before their victims some goal which, when they have won, is to prove their desired haven. But their most extended flights can reach no sanctuary of peace; they can only serve to aggravate the ruling passions of the heart which they were meant to satisfy.

The selfish man deliberately evades the responsibilities that justly come home to him : he turns a deaf ear to the claims which his neighbour, his country, his God, have upon his services, and in due course comes to be wholly unconscious of such claims. He makes a wilderness of his moral duties, and hopes to find it peace. But what man is there that has ever abandoned his post and, like Jonah, fled from duties he feared to face that has not been arrested somewhere in his flight, and forced to confront anew the claims he has dishonoured, and the tasks that have been awaiting the moment of his return. For the deliberate offender there is no escape till he has paid the uttermost farthing. The words are the Master's own.

We must be faithful where we are now, and here we must at all costs seek to carry the spirit of Christ into all our relations and dealings with our fellowmen. We must discharge our life's callings as unto God, and find therein the blessedness of Heaven.

These simple truths need to be pressed home, and particularly in trade and commerce, because of the prevalent idea that Christ's teaching cannot be put into practice in business matters. From the industrial, political, and international strifes that are waged from time to time many would fain escape to some haven of rest, but the men who should lead their fellows in such struggles must not indulge in longings after another and easier lot, for these evils have arisen through unfaithfulness, generation after generation, in our actual callings: we have discharged our duties as unto men and not unto God : we have given loose reins to our covetousness, or else we have buried our talent, and eaten the bread of idleness ; and now is it strange that we are suffering from our self-indulgence, burdened with cares, personal, national, or international, that God has not laid upon us, and filled with desires that God can never bless ? There is no remedy for these troubles

save to bring God into our personal and national life. We must struggle on, till the wrongs and injustices that prevail are overcome. And the help of every man, woman, and child is herein needed, and no true help, however slight, is in this great struggle without its due result.

Say not the struggle naught availeth,
The labour and the wounds are vain,
The enemy fainteth not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain ;

For, while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent flooding in the main.

And yet, though we admit these truths, the fallacy still persists in the hearts of men that their true blessedness can be created by more favourable seasons and scenes and circumstances. This fallacy is almost as old as time itself. It appears in the most ancient legends of the world, and is widely attested in its oldest and greatest literatures. It has given birth to great classics, such as the *Republic* of Plato and More's *Utopia*, and to lesser works in modern times. The essential characteristic of these works is the belief that the reformation of the race is to be sought, first and mainly, in a change of man's material environment, and not, first and chiefly, in a spiritual transformation of man himself.

The same fallacy lies at the base of all the great socialist schemes. It is simply pathetic to observe the naïve and childish confidence that Socialists, Communists, and Bolshevists place in their respective theories and the possibility of their realisation by purely outward changes in man's environment.

By the discoveries of science, by legal reforms, by the equalisation of wealth, by the recasting of our social conditions, such dreamers are assured,

a reign of peace and righteousness will be established on earth. It is the vainest of vain delusions, demoralising to those who accept it, steadily destroying their self-respect, and making them mere parasites on the thrifty and self-respecting. What are all these Utopias but expressions of a feeling that, given more favourable conditions, we should be good men: that, given a more favourable lot, we should be generous and true, pure and unselfish, men. Hence we pray—not for a change of heart, but for a change of environment, where there will be nothing to try our tempers, nothing to awake our greed and covetousness, nothing to tempt our purity, nothing to turn us aside from the path of truth and rectitude and honour.

Do we not recognise that all this is nothing else than to pray

> "Oh that I had wings like a dove
> Then would I fly away and be at rest."

But, though this conception is hopelessly wrong, though man's soul cannot be redeemed by merely changing or mending its surroundings, yet there is a right element in the universal longing of humanity for a changed environment. For, however strongly we believe that this is God's world in which our lot is cast, and that the innumerable evils, the unutterable wrongs, and tyrannies, and shames, that are tending to work its ruin in the present, are not God's doing but mainly man's own, and must therefore be overcome by man himself in the power of God: though this, I repeat, is our deepest conviction, yet we can rightly long and work for a time when Christ's reign shall establish itself more and more in this life and on this earth, when the commonwealth under which we live will cherish and foster spiritual things, and furnish a fitting field for the manifestation of the best qualities within us, for the disinterested quest

of knowledge and truth, for the fulfilment of equity and righteousness in all our dealings, man with man, class with class, state with state, for the realisation of purity, and faith and love: in short, for the supersession of the kingdom of this world by the Kingdom of our Lord and of His righteousness.

In the first chapters of Genesis the certainty of the triumph of righteousness is proclaimed in unforgettable words. In the great parable of the Creation in Genesis ii., iii., wherein an ancient Hebrew saint has recast a tradition of Babylon, and described the fall of man, the triumph of sin, and the expulsion of man from the presence of God, we find one of the notablest prophecies in all Old Testament literature. For when all is dark, and the hopes of humanity seem blasted for ever, the following sentence is pronounced by God on the prime agent of evil: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, though thou shalt bruise his heel." Here it is declared that man will never make terms with the sin that has brought about his fall and is doing so every day: that, however frequently he may succumb, he will never yield himself finally to the life of the beast within him: that from his very fall will arise the birthpangs of the higher life: and that henceforward the struggle will proceed without pause, or armistice, or truce, and, though man in this fierce conflict with sin will suffer grievous hurt, yet the result will be victory: though man's heel will be bruised in this strife, he will crush and destroy the very head of sin itself. Here is the unshatterable optimism of faith: here the first evangel, the first good tidings set forth for our humanity.

But, if this victory is to be won, it must be won by each and all of us in our several callings, and this victory can be won in various degrees even in the present life as the fruit of spiritual faithfulness.

If we seek the Kingdom of God and His righteous-

ness we shall assuredly find it. But we cannot have it won for us by others, nor achieve any grace, or virtue, or righteousness, of the kingdom, for which we have not ourselves earnestly striven. But if we seek them with all our hearts we shall surely find them. On the other hand, in the material world no man can reckon with certainty on attaining any purely earthly object such as wealth, power, high place, or even a minimum of material comfort. All these are exposed to innumerable accidents and, even when they are won, they fail to satisfy man's restless spirit.

But no man need ever fail to achieve the spiritual end he has laboured for. This is the one certainty in this most uncertain world. It may, indeed, be only in partial measure that he achieves it, but the partial achievement is an earnest, a divine pledge, of ever fuller achievement here and hereafter. In the realm of spiritual things we cannot fail to reap what we have sown. If, then, everything may disappoint save the harvest of things sown to the spirit, if the Kingdom of God is first and essentially a kingdom within us, if inward blessedness is the only blessedness that can satisfy the soul of man, and that in growing measure through the eternal ages, then we may never indulge in the delusive and faithless prayer

> " Oh that I had wings like a dove
> Then would I fly away and be at rest."

Rather we must win our peace where we are, and not where we fain would be ; we must face the hard duty God has given us, and not some other duty we should prefer, we must hallow the lot, however irksome it be, that God has assigned us, and not some easier one of our own imagining ; we must give ourselves to the doing of our Father's business now, and not adjourn it to some more convenient season ; for what are all these pleas of the shirking heart but vain flights into the wilderness in quest of a rest and peace

the wilderness can never give? This is not the stuff of which Christ's soldier is made. He is assured that he can, because he ought. His is the invincible optimism of the victor who in the Book of Revelation is constantly described as " he that overcometh," and whose character could not be more fittingly described than in Browning's words :

" One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake."

THE CHIEF END OF MAN'S LIFE

"Therefore I say unto you, be not anxious for your life what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body what ye shall put on. . . . But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." *Matt.* vi. 25, 33.

"We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." *Acts* xiv. 22.

Two ideals of life are here implied or, in part, expressly stated. The lower ideal is, if we interpret our Lord's words literally, that which is bounded by the horizons of the purely physical life—food and drink and clothing. But the thought of the Master is not, of course, to be limited to the lowest needs of this life. His words are directed against every human ideal or ambition that falls short of the highest. Hence pleasure, whether grossly sensual or of the most refined description, wealth, high place, distinction in the world of fashion, in politics, or in the commonwealth of learning, or art, or letters, are just as strongly denounced by our Lord in these words as the meanest necessities of life, when these necessities are suffered, either singly or in combination, to take the chief place in the shaping of man's life.

Christ will accept of no divided service. His claim is co-extensive with every province of human life. And if we accept His teaching and make the Kingdom of God and His righteousness our chief aim, then the Master gives us the assurance that all things needful to build up a life ever-growing in truth, purity, nobleness, strength, and joy, will be given us in their richest measure, pressed down and flowing over. But alas! as we look forth on life with our prudential views, with our untrained or biased judg-

ments, with our lack of spiritual insight, we constantly lose sight of the things that are real and eternal in our busy quest of the things that are temporal and lie immediately at hand, and that satisfy the lower cravings of our nature, and so we often live as though we were mere ephemera, beings who have no outlook beyond the things of sense and time, or even beyond the passing moment.

But the words of Christ not only set forth the two ideals: they go further: they lay down implicitly the retribution that befalls, sooner or later but inevitably, those who make the attainment of the things of this life their first and chief ambition. And this retribution is anxiety, misgiving, care, fearfulness, apprehensiveness, nervous disease in its manifold forms. And just as these evils are the inevitable sequel of the lower life, so freedom from these destroyers of our spiritual and other powers is the note of the higher life.

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." In these words the tasks of two beings in the creation of Christian character are presupposed, the finite being, man, and the Infinite Being, God our Father. The first is the individual man: his task is to seek first and above all the kingdom of God and His righteousness. The second is God: and God's task is to see that His child has everything that he actually needs while engaged in the quest of the things that are real and eternal; though we must remember that it is God who is the creator and Father of man; that it is God who first seeks man, and not man who first seeks God.

Now this teaching of Christ was given to multitudes of all classes in Palestine, but the bulk of Christ's hearers were the poor, who felt the pinch of poverty, and were a constant prey to anxiety as to the needs of the morrow.

Our Lord recognises this as a real ground for anxiety, but He condemns man's yielding to it, as

destructive to the formation of any kind of noble character. He may have impressed on His hearers that the greater part of the misery of man comes, not from the actual presence of trouble, but from the apprehension of it; for His words in the text which we have chosen clearly imply it. Men are prone to exaggerate the actual evils of life, and to conjure up others that are merely possible or imaginary, and so to suffer their vital energies to be crushed by illusions of their own creation. And thus it comes about that their strength and vitality are needlessly worn down, their peace of mind wrecked, and their lives shortened—not by hard work, but by mere illusory and imaginary anxieties. The rich are haunted by care as incessantly as their poorer brethren, though their anxieties naturally assume other forms. The rich, indeed, are exposed to temptations far more subtle and perilous than those who have only a very moderate means of subsistence. Such a thought underlies the words of Christ spoken on another occasion: "How hardly shall those that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God." These words teach unquestionably that material wealth and a fulness of the other good things of this life are dangerous possessions, and are apt to extinguish in man his consciousness of his need of the highest things. Such possessions may be compared to the Circean draught, which, according to Greek mythology, transformed possible sons and daughters of God into swine that were fit only for wallowing in the mire.

But to return. Anxiety about temporal needs is as old as humanity. Let us not, however, go back earlier than the age immediately preceding the advent of Christ, when it formed a leading problem in the schools of the Greek teachers of morals and philosophy. For the Greeks owed the formation of their character, when it was best formed, to their moral *philosophy*, and not to the idolatrous popular

religions of their time. Two of these schools of philosophy are mentioned in the New Testament—those of the Stoics and the Epicureans. With the Epicureans we need not concern ourselves. Though their founder, Epicurus, who made pleasure the end of life, sought to rescue life from the onset of pleasure's destructive powers, to introduce an equable temper of mind, and to make the best of to-day, since there was no counting on the morrow, his followers steadily degenerated, till at last the words, "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die" became a not unjust summary of their principles.

But the Stoics struck a loftier note. They taught that the things of life which are not within our power are neither good nor evil. Wealth and poverty are merely accidents in the life of the individual, and, accordingly, cannot make a man morally better or worse. Similarly, external honours or contumely should not affect the wise man, nor yet should pain nor sorrow. All these, the Stoics taught, are but the accidents of life, and a man should not allow his peace of mind to be affected by anything outside his own control. The wise man should be subject to the law within, and to no other. The dictates of this law of the mind are absolute, and, when transgressed, are apt to cause him much trouble of heart.

Stoicism was a noble system from the purely moral standpoint, and, accordingly, so long as the ills of human life, personal, social or political, were still below the horizon, it appealed to the nobler natures in Greece and Rome. But unhappily this lofty creed was linked up with a pantheistic doctrine, which taught that there is no personal immortality beyond this life, and no Divine personal power which can enable its disciples, while confronting a world in arms against them, to translate their heroic faith into living deeds. And so it came about that Stoicism could not help the ordinary man, but only a few

such valiant souls as Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, who would have lived noble lives whatever their creed might have been.

But Christ was no Stoic. He was more sensitive than the most sensitive of human beings to the ills, and privations, and trials of human life. He freely admitted that man could not dispense with food and drink and raiment—not to speak of his higher and intellectual needs; but, though the lack of such things is an evil, it is not, He taught, destructive of the highest and divinest elements in man. Accordingly, He puts these needs of the body in the second place, and lays the supreme emphasis on what should be man's first and main desire: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." This should be man's first and main desire; as regards his lower and bodily needs Christ assures us that it is God's task to see to these: "Your Heavenly Father," he declareth, "knoweth that ye have need of these things." "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is in the field and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

Now there is nothing unreasonable, or unpractical, or fanatical, in such teaching. Christ does not teach us to give up working: He does not bid us to expect God to provide us with food, and clothing, and shelter, while we idly neglect the obvious means of securing these. Nay, on the contrary, if God is our Father, then, as God's children, we must work, and work with a conscientiousness and thoroughness that are possible only for those who recognise such a divine relation between themselves and God. This lesson is enforced continually in the parables. Every man is required to use to the full the talents God has given him, and is to be judged in accordance with the use he has made of them.

The Master, in the Fourth Gospel, declares: "The Father worketh hitherto and I work." There are not, there cannot be, any voluntary or deliberate

idlers, or parasites, in the Kingdom of God. No citizen of that Kingdom can be content to be unemployed. And so the great apostle of the Gentiles declares: "If a man work not, neither should he eat." These words presuppose of course that there is work for the man, and that he deliberately refuses to undertake it, or to undertake it except on his own terms irrespective of the common weal.

Work, then, is a divine necessity of the Kingdom, but worry and anxiety must be absolutely abjured. When a man worries, it is an infallible indication that he is making the lower things of life *his chief aim*, and is becoming the victim of his own apprehensions and fears.

Now absolute trust in God's care for us, while we are seeking to fulfil His will, is an essential element in the Christian faith. It is not a true faith, that trusts God in the spiritual sphere of life, trusts, namely, that He will forgive us and redeem us, and yet at the same time distrusts Him in the material and ordinary things of life. True faith requires us to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then we shall find that the most diverse experiences of life cannot do otherwise than serve to create and discipline in us the Christian character, the most diverse experiences of life—its days of work and hours of leisure, its joys and sorrows, its delights and no less its bitterest agonies, its triumphs of achievement, its calvaries of broken hopes, the joys we harvest from true friends no less than the anguish we suffer from the treacheries of those we trusted: nay more, even our own most cowardly and shameful hours, when such evil experiences summon us back to a renewal of the abandoned strife, to a rebuilding of the fallen purpose, to a reconsecration of ourselves to the service of our God, Whom we have forsaken in some moment of weakness, or of deliberate faithlessness.

But, though an absolute trust in God relieves us from anxiety regarding the lower needs of life, it is

obvious, as we have just suggested, that it does not exempt us from the common vicissitudes of human life—from its pains and griefs, or from the anguish caused by the hostility, deceit, or treachery, of those we deemed our friends.

Even the Christ was exposed to all these evils, and His disciples must be prepared sooner or later to encounter them, though in infinitely lesser measure. Without such trial, and temptation, and affliction, human character cannot be perfected, or attain to the heights of purity, and truth, and love, that God has willed that His children should attain. The energies of the soul cannot be called into action, save in the face of resistance, nor the splendour of man's free-will, save in the battle of fierce temptation. Nothing that is noble, or heroic, or saintly, in human life has been achieved, save by those who have passed through some furnace of affliction. Furthermore, if we are Christ's disciples, we must always be growing in insight and loyalty, we must always be recognising new truths, and fulfilling new duties. So far as we retain and develop this capacity, we must be ever advancing: there is no standing still in the narrow path—the narrow path which all must pursue who are seeking to realise the life that is eternal.

Thus Christ has come to give us a full and glorious life—not a life of negative freedom and inglorious ease, but a life filled with truth, and purity, and faith, and love, and high adventure, but in so doing He does not require us to neglect our business, our homes, our social pleasures. Far from it: He requires us to bring our highest motives to bear on our lowliest duties, and to transform them into part and parcel of an immortal's history, and to make the life of each of His disciples a divine epic. Only in the sphere of our ordinary commonplace life, and not in some artificial discipline of man's devising, can our faith win the assurance that the true life is a thing at once as real and eternal as the universe of God.

We can hardly emphasise this fact too strongly. Our religion does not consist in our attendance at public worship, nor in our participation in the Eucharist, nor yet in our private prayers. These are only the means of religion—mighty means indeed and indispensable for the earnest seeker—but they are not in themselves religion. They are the means whereby man is equipped for the development of his life as a child of God. And, as I have already said, the sphere in which his life is to be developed embraces all the ordinary everyday tasks which we have severally to fulfil, the various vocations of life to which it pleaseth God to call us.

What, my brethren, are you seeking? Is it the good things of this world and nothing higher and beyond them? If so, you may possibly succeed in getting them—its pleasures, gross or refined, its riches, or honours, but, even if you do so, sooner or later, here or elsewhere, you will discover the worthlessness of the things for which you have exchanged your soul; and by your own deeds have built a dungeon for your soul, from which there is no escape till you have paid the uttermost farthing, and been redeemed by the redemption which Christ is seeking to work out on your behalf.

But if, on the other hand, you seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, there will be no possibility of your failing to find them, and therein too I can add my testimony that, whereas I have known of numberless lives that have passed away filled with regret and despair, or else exhibiting that stolid indifference that marks the soul that has atrophied its highest ideals, and made the secondary things of life its chief aim, I have never known a single soul that has regretted making the Kingdom of God and His righteousness its chief and supreme desire, however severe were the afflictions, physical and spiritual, through which it had to pass in its quest.

THE RIGHT AND THE WRONG MOTIVES IN HUMAN LIFE

" I seek not yours, but you." 2 *Cor.* xii. 14.

THESE words occur in an epistle that is in the main a defence by St. Paul of his apostolic character and course of life. In the Church of Corinth, which he had established by his self-denying labours, a strong and virulent anti-Pauline party had arisen, which for its own ends sought to undermine the influence and character of the apostle. As these calumnious attacks not only deeply wounded the heart of St. Paul, but actually imperilled the existence of the Christian Church at Corinth, the apostle was obliged, as a simple matter of duty, to encounter them openly, and this he did in the epistle before us, where, now with irresistible logic, now with passionate irony and scathing invective, he crushed his opponents in an overwhelming defeat. Even his most generous actions were called in question by his enemies, and in the passage before us he is engaged in defending the disinterestedness with which he had preached to them the Gospel of Christ. In chapter xi. 7 he asks " have I committed an offence, because I have preached to you the Gospel of God freely ? " To this question he returns in the context, and declares that he is ready to visit them for the third time also, and this without recompense on their part: that he will gladly spend and be spent for their sakes, though, he adds, with deepest sadness, " the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." And the reason he thus preaches and ministers unto them without thanks or recompense is given in the words " for I seek not yours but you," just as on another occasion, when

writing to the Thessalonians, he declares: "What is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? for ye are our glory and our joy." Into no heart in the apostolic circle had entered more deeply the Christlike love of souls, and justly is this deepest trait in the Pauline character set forth by a living poet:

"Hearts have I won of sister or of brother
Quick on the earth or hidden in the sod.
Lo! every heart awaiteth me—another
Friend in the blameless family of God.

"What was their sweet desire and subtle yearning?
Lovers and ladies whom their song enrols;
Faint to the flame which in my breast is burning,
Less than the love with which I ache for souls."

Our subject, then, my brethren, is the principle embodied in the words—"I seek not yours but you." And this principle not only lies at the foundation of all true Christianity, but is involved in the very constitution of man. Man is so formed as to seek his brother man: his affections are framed with reference to others, and he attains to true humanity exactly in the measure in which he seeks and loves others, not for what they have, but for what they are in themselves. How true is this of the child: the child asks our thoughtfulness and our love; what is our wealth, our cleverness, our position, our grandeur to it, if we withhold ourselves? how its smile coming straight from its heart takes hold of us and makes us natural for the moment; but alas the world soon teaches the child a lower wisdom with the growing years, and the smile often ceases to be a revelation, and becomes a mere mask of the real intents of the heart.

And yet this truth of our humanity is continually being rediscovered even by the selfish, who certainly are not engaged in the quest of it. How often does

one man seek the friendship of another from self-regarding motives, either because of his wealth or position, or with some such unworthy aim, but by and by, as heart touches heart, comes to love his friend for his own sake, despite that friend's subsequent loss of his outward possessions. And thus he rises into a higher world, in which he can truly say to his friend, " I seek not yours, but you."

All true life of man with man is a realisation of this principle, where heart seeks to meet with heart, where feeling spontaneously springs forth to greet its kindred feeling, and thought leaps forth to wed with thought.

And yet, though this *is* the principle underlying all true and uncorrupted life, it is undeniably the common way, and especially at the present day, to desire what men have, and not the men themselves ; and thus the impression is generated, that we more or less stand in each other's way, are a hindrance to each other's comfort and happiness : that life is a strife and a rivalry, and the problem of life is to make the largest use of others, and to render them the smallest return of service, to seek, in short, not them, but theirs. And thus it comes that, when man turns his back on God, his life becomes a virtual embodiment of the words of Cain, " Am I my brother's keeper ? " In this attitude of heart we have the antithesis to that of St. Paul when he declares: " I seek not yours but you." And as the former temper logically issues in a brother's destruction for the sake of self, so the latter issues in the sacrifice of self for a brother's welfare—" I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake."

When men are self-seeking, mere comfort, ease, wealth, position, are too generally their only aim. Such aims never carry men out of themselves into self-forgetful action. And thus men become their own centres, and every question is decided, for or against, according as it is favourable or adverse to their

private interests. Their entire affections, sentiments, ideals, are yoked to the car of self; and thus the powers which were given in order to carry us out of ourselves into self-forgetful action are perverted, and in their perversion aggravate the disease of selfishness, which they should in large measure have proved the means of destroying.

Under such conditions works of public benevolence may be wrought, but such works are robbed of all merit by the motive which inspired them. If a deed of public justice is performed, its spring will be found rather in the desire for publicity than in the desire for justice. If a self-seeking nature lends itself to a charitable action, its activity is due to the desire to gain credit with the conventional righteousness of the day. If it prays against temptation, its real dread is of falling, not into sin, but into social blunders or indiscretions, and if it would be delivered from evil, it is the evil, not of wrongdoing, but of loss, or pain, or the scorn of men.

And the effects of the self-seeking temper are just as destructive to society as they are debasing to the individual. For, so far as it is indulged, it disorganises society and obliterates mutual respect and reverence, which are the chief means of holding society together, and which are so often conspicuously absent from the relations of the classes of the employers and the employed. Wherever it prevails, men are significant—not for what they are in themselves, but for what they have. Thus the poor man in the presence of his more richly endowed neighbour admires or envies his lot or possessions, but ignores the man himself; and the two—the richer and the poorer—stand face to face, not as members of the same family of God, but mere ciphers in themselves, their only significance consisting in the sums of money they respectively represent. And so envy, or disguised hostility, contempt, and uncharitableness in countless forms, are the only sentiments they

cherish towards each other. And thus the process of demoralisation goes on apace and the degradation of the individual and of society grows ever deeper, and, just when men are on the verge of believing in self-interest alone, some sudden outburst of the passion of pity, or of outraged justice, breaks through the bonds of selfishness, and shatters this damnable theory of self-interest that men had all but accepted as the supreme law of life. Through such experience, hidden depths of our nature are revealed, which no plumbline of materialism is adequate to sound ; and thereby men are lifted out of the gross selfishness, the heartless sloth, and the inhuman indifference into which under lower ideals they were steadily sinking. Inspired by the impulse of pity man feels himself to be his brother's keeper, and confesses both by word and deed, "I seek not yours, but you." This passion finds its object among the hopeless, the suffering, and the outcast. It spreads its broad shield of succour over the weak and helpless : it stays the uplifted arm of many a cruel wrong, and lays low in the dust many an ancient oppression, nor can it close its ears to any cry of suffering humanity without incurring the pangs of self-reproachful shame.

That our nature is furnished with the passion of pity, a passion whose sole office is to relieve the pains and the sufferings of others, is irresistible evidence that a man's life is not constructed on lines of pure selfishness ; for it forces us, however reluctantly, to sacrifice our comfort in order to succour a neighbour's need, and that without thought of any benefit in return.

But, despite all the noble services of this passion to the welfare of humanity, there are tasks appointed for man's achievement towards which it can give no help. Fixing its regards on pain only, it has eyes for nothing else, and, so long as pain's unfailing tokens hide themselves in the background, pity remains quiescent and at ease.

But in the great world of our humanity there are worse ills than pain. The refined and flourishing wickedness, which may be hurrying a nation to destruction,[1] but which is attended by no outward manifest pain, pity passes by unheeded: the invisible cankers that are eating out a people's heart are beyond its diagnosis and treatment, and, whilst beneath many a smiling countenance may be hidden a heart torn with internal strife and offering a last despairing resistance to the evil that is pouring in like a flood, all this tragic history is beyond the power of mere pity to discern or help.

But in the breast of man God plants higher powers, equal to the needs that call them down, and far above compassion in force and worth stands moral love, or love for justice and goodness in themselves, and not for any profit they may bring us. Under the guidance of this passion we rally to the side of men in the measure of their worthiness, just as under the guidance of pity we seek them out in the measure of their suffering. This sentiment calls forth the moral and eternal aspect of things, and makes the common incidents of life events in a drama of eternal interest. It puts a heart of strong endurance into tenderest womanhood: it gives the child a hero's spirit, it takes hold of us with imperious grasp, and forces us to take sides in every struggle where justice is at stake, and in the moment of dread indecision, when Israel wrestles in mortal agony with Amalek, sends forth our spiritual sympathies to nerve the arms of those that lead the fight, and, even when our heroes fall, fills us with an emulous, nay, with a tempestuous, joy.

But even moral love, though it is essentially opposed to selfishness, is not without many imperfections. It can admire nothing but the resolute will struggling against temptation, or the strong

[1]Even Burke (*Reflections on the Revolution in France*, III, 332) gives utterance to the immoral sentiment that "vice itself lost half its evil by losing all its grossness."

yearning efforts of the spirit towards a goodness still unattained. Its benediction is limited to those already committed to the cause of goodness, but it has only reproof for the indifferent, and condemnation for the vicious. In the presence of indifference and vice it stands helpless; it is without provision for quieting the troubled passions, without power to cast out the demons of the heart; at the best it can only scold transgression into sullen silence, and aggravate the guilt it fain would cure. It binds the vicious in his sin by enforcing his exclusion from the circle of the good: it transforms the single or occasional lapse of human frailty into abiding transgression, the passing distemper into lifelong disease.

For man's redemption a higher power, therefore, is needed than compassion, which only seeks out men so far as they are suffering; a higher power than moral love, which attaches itself to them only so far as they are good. We all need friends who will stick by us, not only when we are in trouble, not only when we are engaged in disinterested service and high endeavour, but also, and then we need them most of all, when we fall wholly short, both of their ideals and of our own. Is there then, we ask, no passion, under whose guidance a man shall seek out his brother man, not merely through pity for his pain, nor yet through admiration for his goodness, but out of reverence for something within the man, deeper than either his fame or his goodness, even for the sake of the man himself? Yes, there is such a passion, and this is the love of Christ for man, and in the measure in which a man enters into communion with Christ, just in that measure does he enter into this love for the brethren—this wondrous love for souls. This love, then, which cleaves to the man himself, and not to his possessions or his individual gifts, was practically a new passion, which our Lord introduced into human life. Of private goodness, of public worth, of un-

selfish patriotism, nay, more, of willing martyrdom for the truth, there is no lack of examples in the ancient world, whether in Palestine or in Pagan Greece or Rome ; but where is there aught approaching the divine compassion, the wondrous love of souls, which our Lord inspired in His disciples, in virtue of which their life became a declaration of the truth, "I seek not yours but you?"

The whole aim of our Lord's quest of man is given in the words, "I seek not yours, but you." In that quest Christ is seeking to lift man unto the truth and love and peace for which he is created. He alone knows the infinite worth there is in man : He alone can look below the defilement and degradation in which man has involved himself, and see, even in the most sinful, the possibilities of perfect goodness. He alone can understand man's misery, his sorrows, his difficulties, his blindness, the ever deepening heartaches that underlie his sin. To no heart can man's declension bring such poignant grief. With his marvellous and perfect power of sympathy He knows the anguish that dogs the heels of sin, He bears in His own heart man's woe and shame, and feels his pangs and sorrows as actually His own. And thus as we enter into the mind of Christ and understand, though dimly, the infinite value He places on such a world as ours, the seeming disproportion of the cross vanishes : no sacrifice is too great for the joy of redeeming a spiritual world in ruins : Christ endures the cross for the redemption of suffering humanity.

And the love of Christ lives in some measure in all that follow Him. "I seek not yours, but you" is the professed principle of Christ's disciple—nay, more, it is the true principle of life of every son of man, if he would but recognise it—this, and not "every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost." With this spirit of his Master within him, his glance pierces below the outward differences that sever man from man, and, scorning such outward circumstance,

he asks not whether it be a Dives or a Lazarus, a bondman or a freeman, to whom his quest is directed. He is not blind to the sins or infirmities of the man he fain would help, but he weighs in no grudging scales his merits or demerits. Right behind all these masks of human souls he presses to where, in the deep silence, he can meet his brother face to face. And, if once he gains such audience, if the heart he tries to help is not vain and sophisticated, the message is no longer hard to press: he can address the man he seeks as one who knows implicitly the holiness from which in his delusion he has turned away, as one who still loves the purity he has through his passions forfeited, as one who in all his best moments writhes under the shame of the sin that has made him an exile from his Father's home.

And as this spirit of our Lord gets completer possession of us, it fits us ever more adequately for the disinterested love and quest of souls by freeing us from the lingering bonds of self: it purges away the selfish desires that restrain and obstruct the nobler passions: it lifts us out of the stifling atmosphere of private piques and grudges: it helps us first to pray for, and then to deal justly by, the man who, as we know from repeated experience, does not deal justly by us, and refusing to hate or wrong him, however he may hate or wrong us, to look to a better time, when he will put away from him these evil things that make true brotherhood impossible.

And this quest of man is at its best when it seeks out the unhappy, the helpless, the sinful—all those who are most in need. And the quest is most successful when it is pursued through the direct action of life on life, and not through the clumsy and often halting machinery of benevolence. Material help is only beneficent, when it is a manifest proof of love, a living sacrament of brotherhood. We can do most for those we wish to help when we trust more to the love that seeks than to the things

it has to bestow, when we seek our neighbour, not from the mere impulse of compassion, or the compulsions of duty, but with our entire personality, with all the best affections wherewith our God has endowed us.

And the foremost objects of this quest are clearly marked out for us by the finger of God in the natural relationships in which our God has placed us, in our homes, in our larger circles of kin and friendship, in our ever-widening relations with men of all sorts and conditions, and in these we have the fitting occasions in which love can apply itself to its task with the largest wisdom, and under the most favourable circumstances. To neglect the claims of home, and kin, and friendship, is to be guilty of the deepest disloyalty to the God who has ordained them.

Next, let us compare the conflicting influences that these two ideals exercise on the temper of man. For the self-seeking temper that finds its chief object in pleasure, gain, power, or reputation, all the grander features of humanity must sooner or later undergo dark and inevitable eclipse. The man in whom such a temper is paramount is being slowly but inevitably isolated from his fellow-man, and lodged in a prison house of his own creation. And so, in due course, every noble enthusiasm turns away from him as from a chilling maleficent influence: disinterested affection instinctively retires into itself before the withering influence of his cynicism and unbelief: unworldly aspiration subsides into silence before the heart that is ever ready to debase with its vile interpretations the highest and best we can offer it. And thus, as the last relics of truth and nobleness are expiring in his breast, and his incapacities for reverence, and faith, and love, are growing daily deeper, and every true affection and thought vanish as he draws near, a godless desolation and a darkness of despair gather irresistibly around his scornful heart, and make him the saddest of all spectacles in the universe, a man

without faith, or hope, or love—a man without God in the world. In contrast with this darkened barren spirit, the man who is trying—and that is the most that the best of us can do—the man who is trying to seek "not yours, but you" has a strangely fruitful existence. He may not utter a single word of reproof or exhortation, and yet how often society is quickened by his very presence. He holds an "open sesame" to the hearts of men. He takes them by storm and makes them his own, whether they will or no; and so enmities are subdued, the demons of suspicion and distrust cast out: the memories of rooted sorrows softened, and even the written troubles of the brain erased: fruitfulness is given to the barren life: fresh courage to the despairing: lost love of truth and purity revived, and a soul in ruins raised to be a temple of God's Holy Spirit. In the redemption of man such men find their highest blessedness, for they seek not yours, but you, and of those they have helped onward they can truly declare—with St. Paul, "ye are our glory and our joy."

And, moreover, though all their interests and energies are engaged in the task of man's redemption they are yet preserved from undue elation over limited goodness, or undue disappointment over imperfect natures; for the more deeply they know, through living communion, the perfectness of Christ, the less are they surprised that man's goodness is at the best but a broken reflection of it. But whilst they thus become the kindest judges of earth's failings, the quickest to detect the faintest germs of goodness, the most loving to foster its earliest promise, whilst they meet with a responsive joy every dawning grace, still with a spiritual urgency they press for the goodness yet unattained; they will not crush the broken reed, and yet must refuse the fulness of their sympathy to the youth who has kept all the commandments, but shrinks back from the loftier

duties now dawning upon his view; they will not quench the smoking flax, yet will allow no rest to the very chiefest disciple, but, paling his past achievements in the splendour of God's higher callings, cheer him on to a still more disinterested goodness, and a still more self-forgetful love.

Thus, in conclusion, while the selfish life, in its resolve to save itself, is steadily losing itself, and dying inevitably to every form of nobleness and faith and love, the self-forgetful life on the other hand is one of growing capacities and powers, of enlarging interests and higher needs, and grows in the measure of its self-forgetful service and quest of others; for we draw nigh to our highest possibilities, as we minister to those of others; we attain unto and possess our true selves as we reach forth unto and possess others, as we enter into their hearts and make them ours, through right of unselfish service.

And the hearts we have won here, in which we have begotten even the smallest element of the divine life, will be ours eternally. When this life is over, and the veil of things visible has been taken away, the souls we have sought and served, the souls we have lifted, even in the slightest measure, into sorrow for their past, and godlike resolve for the coming time, will be friends to welcome us in the larger world, and receive us, as our Lord declares, into everlasting habitations:

"Hearts I have won of sister or of brother,
Quick on the earth or hidden in the sod;
Lo! every heart awaiteth me, another
Friend in the blameless family of God."

WHOM DOES OUR SOUL WORSHIP?

"The Lord of Hosts, before whom I stand." 1 *Kings* xviii. 15.

THE lords before whom men stand are very various, and the same variety is manifested in their worshippers. And according to the character of the Lord before whom men stand, whether this Lord be the God revealed by Christ, or some heathen deity of ancient or modern times, their individual character is ennobled or degraded, and their possibilities for good are enlarged, circumscribed, or destroyed. It is therefore a matter of the highest moment that the lord before whom we stand should be the living and true God, and not an idol of our own creation, whether modern or ancient; for the lord before whom we stand is our sovereign master: there is no escape from his dominion: no rest from his influence, and his character, for good or ill, is ever passing into our own. It is, therefore, in the highest degree instructive to consider the lords that command the regards of men, and, especially, to mark their influence in the life and possibilities of their worshippers. Now we might, with sufficient correctness for our present purpose, divide men into three classes, according to the lords before whom they stand; and the first class would embrace those who deny the existence of a spiritual superior, and limit man's activities wholly to this world; the second—those who acknowledge a goodness above them, but deny its competence to execute its purposes; and the third—those who confess the Christians' God. How these different conceptions arise it is not now our duty to enquire. Let us rather address ourselves to the first class, which is far from uncommon. Multitudes of men who would earnestly disown any

connection with this class nevertheless practically belong to it. Their lives in reality reveal no higher aim than comfort, wealth, self-indulgence, or fame. Their chief concern is for what they regard as the good things of this world, and not for growth in Christian character. Their strength is never spent in the effort to redress human wrong, nor does their reason ever ache as it toils terribly in search of truth. They are ready to maintain that we should not trouble ourselves about anything beyond the visible scene of things. "Who," they ask, "can acquaint us with it? Here, at any rate," they contend, "we know something: we are surrounded with ills that can be set right, and possibilities of well-being that can be realised. Let us struggle, therefore, to have cheap bread and sanitary homes, equitable laws and free institutions, healthy recreations and large knowledge, within the reach of all. Thus we shall make the earth more habitable than we found it, and do infinitely better in working for the world we know, than in spending our energies and aspirations on a world we know not, and thus the powers that religion has diverted to ideal tasks, and so lost to the world's service, will be set free to remedy the concrete ills of life, and make the world an earthly paradise."

With such reasoning men would justify themselves in a thorough-going Materialism, and in some respects their contention is not altogether wrong. And yet so far as the attack on Christianity is at all pertinent, it is effective only against that imperfect and ascetic form of Christianity which esteems earth profane and common life devoid of sacredness: which regards a fast as more spiritual than a mercy, and a burst of spiritual emotion as higher than an act of simple justice. This mediæval and modern superstition is a direct inversion of Christian teaching. If we cannot hallow our present lot as God gave it to us, assuredly we cannot hallow one of our own making; if we cannot find Heaven and eternal life here, it

is a matter of doubt if we can elsewhere. God has endowed us with certain capacities and opportunities, and beset us with definite necessities, forcing us to pursue either this path or that, and has thereby indicated the direction our activities should take; for our duty obviously lies in the direction of our best powers, while our heredity and environment, our own needs and those of our fellow-men, prescribe the form our duty should assume. Christianity thus secures the just exercise of all a man's powers, the least no less than the greatest, and thereby satisfies every equitable claim that Materialism can make. But it not only does this, it also turns the flank of the attack, and shows the utter falsehood of the contention that, if you would better the present, you must neglect the future, if you would make the best of the visible scene of things, you must surrender yourself wholly to their immediate claims, ignoring everything above and beyond them. All history bears witness that, if you would bring out the real greatness of the present, you must dim its lustre under the immortal splendours of the future; if you would have man's duties fulfilled and glorified in things temporal, you must have his affections set on things spiritual or eternal. All ages of faith have been great and productive; as all ages of materialism and unbelief have been mean, barren, and destructive; the times when God's presence has been vividly felt among men have been marked by vast enterprises, great social reforms, and the birth of mighty literatures. There is not an important social reform in modern civilisation which has not sprung from some religious principle.

In the next place, what are we to say of the second class—the many thoughtful men whose position lies midway between Materialism and Christianity? These do not stand in the presence of a world from which God is wholly banished; for they behold a higher than is, a possible that shames their actual,

and this vision disturbs them with a noble discontent. But if this be all, if they merely stand in the presence of a divine world powerless to be born; if their conviction that things are not as they should be rests on no firm basis of truth and hope: if they believe that compassion, truth, love, reverence, cannot be translated into actual experience and shape the world anew, their vision can only serve to steep their soul in sadness, and impart a plaintive note to all the more serious utterances of their heart. In the end they must either renounce their vision as a fond illusion of the mind, or hold it fast with ever aching heart. This pessimistic temper is a sign of a decadent, anæmic, Christianity, of a decaying faith and failing vigour, alike in the race and the individual, and nothing can be done for those in whom it exists, unless we can awake them to the realities with which they are faithlessly trifling. And to do this is impossible, if they are convinced that God holds himself altogether aloof from the world. But if it is once conceded that God has actual communion with man, this communion has its chief field of manifestation in man's conscience and spirit, in the high dawnings of truth and holiness, the quickenings of conscience, the rising contrition, and the aspirations of love. If these, indeed, were but passing fancies of the mind, we might with impunity ignore them, for, devoid of reality, they would have no claim on our obedience; but, as communications of God Himself, they come to us accredited with His authority, revealing themselves in us, but not of us, and secured against our uncertain moods by being anchored in the unchangeableness of God. To despair, then, of the world, were spiritual treason, and to fold the hands in indolence were spiritual apostasy. Indeed, to presume to despair of God's purposes in any case, till we have done our highest and failed, is an overweening arrogance, and an arrogance to be found, not in the

busy workers, but in the drones of the Kingdom, not in the men who are spending themselves for God, but in the children of the untrimmed lamp, the unused talent, and the ungirded loin. If we stand right in the presence of God with the hearing ear and the obedient heart, we shall find in the highest thoughts that visit us, not illusions to mock our despair, but divine revealings to uplift the heart—prophecies of the things that shall be, foregleams and pledges of our own, and the world's, redemption—even Christ in us, the hope of glory.

In every age and nation it is the men who stand before God that remove the mountains of prejudice, lust, and self-interest, and cast them into the depth of the sea. Strong in faith, such men find the present divine, and are assured that God has not withdrawn from the world with some past and golden age, but that in every generation there is a new Pentecost, a fresh descent of the Holy Spirit on faithful and expectant hearts.

We would now address ourselves to the third class, which does profess to stand before the Christian God. If, indeed, we would tell the name of the God before whom we really stand, it is not enough to name the Church to which we belong, or the Creed we profess; we must look deep into our heart and discover there what it is that we most desire, and what is the aim or temper that gives character to all the smaller issues of life. Here, indeed, we find the name of the God before whom we stand in spirit and conduct, in work and life—our real God; whereas the Being before whom we profess to stand may have no real part in our lives, and, if He were absent from the universe, and there were no hereafter, it would not practically affect the reckless passion, the self-indulgent ease, or the prudential worldliness of some of us. The character of the Lord before whom men really stand passes into their character and countenance, each idol imparting its own

peculiar complexion to its votaries. You can discern in the broken will and coarsened features the slave of degrading passion, in the mean spirit and sordid look the servant of Mammon, in the glib tongue and empty self-content the soul that stands in the presence of nothing higher or holier than itself.

But a man may be free from the domineering violence of any one single passion, and yet manifest no less surely the earthliness of his ideals by his calm general attachment to the good things of this life, and while, like Dives of old, he spends the bulk of his means in respectable and possibly refined self-indulgence, his responses to the claims of God and of his brethren upon him, compared with his needless expenditure, may be as the crumbs that fall from his luxurious table. Nor does smallness of means preclude the possibility of our resembling Dives in conduct and in destiny. Hence we should ask ourselves what relation our needless expenses on points of personal comfort or display bear to the help we extend to the truly needy, to Missionary enterprise, to the Church which mothers us, to the good and blessed land which God gave to our forefathers and still vouchsafes to give to us their children?

Again, how often does the real desire to stand in God's presence fall short of its object, because nursed amid smothered grudges against our neighbour, and ill-concealed envyings that would elbow out of recognition a kindred or superior excellence, and disguise the expression of malevolence under the cloke of duty. All envy of another's worth or success implies impurity of motive, and betrays the self-seeker in the professed servant of God.

In this connection we must guard against the vulgar error of confounding restless action with abounding spiritual service; for constitutional energy, organising powers, and zeal, though unfed

by any inspiration of God, may bring about great results in this world, that have, however, no reference to anything beyond its narrow horizons. Divine recognition of work depends not on its quantity, but on its quality, and the activities of men who stand out before the world as mighty workers for God may often be recorded and acknowledged in the ledger of Mammon, but be without remembrance in the Book of Life.

Passing on from such forms of imperfect reverence, our subject leads us to consider some of the characteristics that belong to those who, notwithstanding much infirmity and frequent failure, still go on striving to stand in God's presence, and to translate His will into the vernacular of high thoughts, wise words, and noble deeds. Now, if the presence of a true saint or hero abases us with the consciousness of unworthiness, how much more must the presence of the All-Holy beget in us abounding humility. And humility will save us from the dangers of pride and vanity. The dangers of pride are very great, for to the proud man aspiration and growth are impossible: blind to all goodness transcending his attainment, and proud from comparison of his own with lesser worth, he becomes an idolator of self, and herein no doubt he gains a certain strength of character; for he can stand alone, and despise alike the censure and the praise of men; but he purchases self-reliance and self-satisfaction at the cost of spiritual stagnation and death. Not less, though of another kind, are the dangers of vanity. The vain man cannot stand alone, however upright his cause and clear his duty, unless the voices of others confirm his resolution, and follow him with their applause. And, thus, as the proud man stands in no presence higher than his own, the vain man stands in no presence higher than that of the commonplace public around him. Without stability of character, he is a prey to every fresh wind of fashion, opinion,

or doctrine; and, devoid of true self-reliance, he forms, so long as vanity rules him, a character on which nothing great or noble can be reared.

If, therefore, we stand in the presence of God, we are secured alike against the sins of pride and vanity, rescued from the weaknesses of the vain man, from the spiritual stagnation and contempt of the proud. If we stand in God's presence, we cannot be guilty of the servility which grovels to the rich and powerful, but can hardly disguise its contempt for the poor and weak. If we stand in God's presence we shall become true men, strong men, bowing to no pre-eminence but that of goodness, and owning no authority but that of the Supreme.

And further, we shall find that Presence to be not merely the refuge of our weakness, but the educator of all our strength. It will rescue us from worry and distraction, and set free all the powers of the soul to be flung undissipated and unimpaired into the cause of the God before whom we stand.

And who can gauge the might of those powers when freed from every care and fear, and committed to the Almighty to wield them at His will? Every several capacity feels the quickening influence of his Presence, and is delivered from the distraction and thraldom of self-made ends and side-issues, to serve the only living and true God.

And to true humility of heart and strength of soul the presence of God will add divine peace. And how great an endowment is this for the sons of men! But, like all spiritual things, it can only be spiritually received. It can only rightfully spring from communion with God, it can only truly belong to a heart set on purity and truth and righteousness. God cannot bestow it on the worldly, the indolent, the impure, the selfish, the unfaithful, the unforgiving; for His peace implies oneness with Christ, conformity to His will; and so when we pray for the peace of God, we are not praying for easier duties and lighter

crosses, for exemption from trouble, or immunity from the wonted travail and suffering of man ; nay, we are praying for the Spirit of Christ Himself, for worthiness to suffer for His sake, for courage ready for His completed will—we are praying not to have the cross removed, but that we may bear it worthily and unto the end. And as this peace springs from conformity to Christ's will, so it can only be preserved by ever-growing faithfulness to the revelations of that Will. Hence there can be no resting in habit, no pausing in the customary ; for when we achieve ease in the fulfilment of any duty, the duty, we may feel assured, has lost its spirituality and become mechanical. Some men indeed there are, whose conscience never strays beyond the well-kept enclosure of their habits, and so, standing before nothing higher than their own obvious respectability, they suffer from no self-reproachings, they experience no moral dissatisfactions, they enjoy rest—they have made a wilderness of their spiritual nature, and they call it peace. The great advantage of a life of well-ordered habit is that it secures the soul against mean temptations, and sets its powers free to push forward and achieve the holiness that rebukes its present attainment, and when once this ideal of the past is translated into actual deeds, and consolidated into habit, the soul's energies are again released to fulfil the higher obligations already dawning upon it : and faithful hearts are never long without hearing fresh calls to action, and have scarcely given themselves to well-earned repose ere they strike their tents anew, and resume the march on loftier enterprise intent.

But if, in the face of such divine commandment to go forward, the soul faithlessly prefers ease, and declines effort, it must become the prey of self-accusing shame ; for such shame ever dogs the steps of imperfect earnestness, and the sense of conscious baseness fills with unrest, and is the one form of

sorrow for which there is no balm in Heaven or earth. It is true indeed that the faithful heart must often experience sorrow, but it is the sorrow not of self-chosen baseness, but of infinite aspiration pursuing a holiness it has as yet failed to make its own.

But alas for human infirmity ! even after we have toiled severely and faithfully, in times of baffled hope or physical prostration or national anxiety, we often yield to unbelief, and rob ourselves of the peace that rightly should be ours. Wanting in simple faith, we are not content to do our best and leave results to God, but we must intrude our selfwill into the realm of His Providence, and give ourselves to irritation and discontent, if God's ways are not as our ways, and the streams of His grace flow not in the channels of our making. So, amid the heats and pressure of life, when manifold cares encompass, and high purposes are baffled, we lose our rest in God, and fret, as if there was no infinite peace embracing the sphere of this world's wide disquiet, no infinite reason resolving earth's discords into the harmonies of Heaven. Yea, in loneliness and depression, when the spirits droop, when the promise of years seems broken, and long-laboured purposes pine away unfulfilled, we often cry out in sheer heart-weariness and despair, and forget the Presence in which we stand ; but such a lapse into unfaithfulness against the God we revere can, for faithful souls, only issue in a new and purer devotedness : and thus, with renewed vows and completer consecration, restored to the Presence from which we had withdrawn, in the light of that Presence we behold as in open vision the eternal realities—we see the so-called strong things of this world, its long established wrongs, its persistent guilt and sin, passing slowly, but irresistibly, over the brink of annihilation : we see the things which, in earth's estimation, are not to be the things that truly and eternally are—love's

discredited loyalties justified, faith's lost battles won, right triumphant fully and for ever over wrong, the vision of poet and prophet consummated, the sigh of the struggling saint ending in the note of triumph, and the longings of contrite discipleship crowned with the fruition of the Eternal God. Yea, eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God reveals to those who stand continually before Him.

THE LONELINESS OF THE SOUL UNLESS IT RISES UNTO LIFE IN GOD

"Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." *John* xvi. 32.

OUR Lord's life was essentially a lonely one. Raised infinitely above the best of His contemporaries in purity of aim and perfectness of life, His very elevation of character severed Him from human sympathy, and from the intelligent love of the hearts around Him. And this spiritual loneliness was all the more severe as, with His true humanity, He clung to every human tie with purest affection, only surrendering it when His divinest duties claimed His devotion.

His purposes, teachings, actions, were too self-forgetful, too divine, to be understood by the self-seeking multitudes that thronged His footsteps. All classes alike misconceived and misrepresented Him. The Pharisees drew aloof from Him as a man that had broken with the traditions of the Elders, and eaten with Publicans and sinners: the Sadducees declared against Him as a dangerous revolutionary, and soon both Pharisees and Sadducees combined in order to destroy Him as one whose principles were destructive of their religious interests, and fatal to the existence of the nation.

Every fresh defection of Israel was a fresh and heavier burden for Him who came to redeem Israel; but a far severer trial befell Him. Closely on the defection of the religious and social leaders of the nation followed that of the people at large, whose faith began to die away, and whose early enthusiasms

subsided into a cold indifference, or else changed into active hostility.

Thus, one by one, every class in Palestine declared against Christ, and smaller and smaller grew the numbers of His personal adherents, till at last only a few specially chosen disciples clung to Him with a wavering, bewildered devotion; for even those that knew Him best failed to understand Him. And yet each new defection, however deeply it stung His heart, served only to throw Him back more fully on the fellowship of the Father, and the perfect consciousness of that fellowship, which was only deepened by the gathering loneliness around, enabled Him to declare with spiritual calmness "Behold the hour cometh, yea is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone, and yet I am not alone because the Father is with Me."

This spiritual solitariness, this power of standing alone, which marked our Lord's life, must in some degree mark the life of every true son and daughter of God, and the highest and most spiritual part of our lives must belong to experiences in which no stranger intermeddleth, but the soul is cast in solitary dependence on the help of our Father in Heaven.

This spiritual solitariness is at seasons a spiritual necessity in the lives of such as follow the Lord. Let us study how some prominent types of character yield themselves to, or else seek to evade, this necessity of life in God.

First there are the men of strong self-reliant temper, who resolve to act alone, who seek no counsel and crave no sympathy, and proceed calmly on their way, careless of the praise, and indifferent to the blame, of men. The power that such men wield over their own thought and conduct is all but incomprehensible. If they are thinkers, in the field of thought they can isolate themselves from disturbing influences, and, carrying out their task

without the fear of consequence or the paralysing effects of doubt, can pass from the old familiar error to the new truth that dislodges it, without a single symptom of human weakness. If they are men of action, in the field of action their resolves are forthwith carried into effect, and, waiting for no man's support, provided they be men of integrity, they take the line that conscience dictates, and making no concession to themselves, they allow of none to the feelings and weaknesses of others. So far removed from common infirmity, they naturally fail to call forth the sympathy of their fellows, and however much they may compel the respect of men, they cannot command their love. Accordingly such men, though a power in the world, are only a second-rate power, and fail to receive from their fellows the highest which they have to give, and which they give willingly, when they find a man who calls forth their sympathy and reverence, their trust and love.

And, moreover, if this self-reliance is after all only a constitutional or acquired strength of character, when the battle of life becomes too severe even for their deep-rooted self-reliance, and their spirit fails them, their failure, since they have no spiritual succour to fall back upon, can only end in despair—a despair from which there is no redemption, unless haply amid the ruins of their hopes they are still able to cast themselves on the only sure and eternal refuge of the heart of man, and find in Him their everlasting stay and strength.

Over against this self-reliant class, we have the class of men who are afraid to stand alone, who are all but wholly dependent on human sympathy, and whose hearts, full of affection, shrink from solitude, not necessarily from weakness of judgment or incapacity for thought, but from the very intensity of their feelings. Such dependence on the sympathy of others may be combined with high intellectual gifts

and culture, or with the average gifts of the ordinary man.

In the former case, however great the intellectual powers, the affectionate mind cannot endure to be alone, and must in all its efforts have the company of some sympathetic heart. When sustained by such support it will gladly face loss and sorrow, danger and shame. It deprecates nothing but a solitary human existence.

The influence that such a man wields over his fellows is all but incalculable; and this influence is won by his profound and loving knowledge of the human heart. Acquaintance with his own strong affections and passions gives him the key that unlocks the secrets of ours, and makes him deeply read in the inmost mysteries of the heart. He understands our prejudices, he knows our failings, he can detect our sophistries, and yet can appreciate the true worth we possess in spite of them all. Is it a matter for wonder that we give such a man our reverence, and listen to his voice as to the breathings of inspiration, who thus lays bare the secret of our hearts, voices our sorrows, and weeps our very tears?

And yet this combination of high gifts and excessive dependence on the sympathy of others is not infrequently accompanied with great moral feebleness; for where can a man so highly gifted find the sympathy which the man of coarser mould can find so readily? Who will respond to his lofty aims and unworldly aspirations? He paints a piteous scene of need, of wrong, or injustice: the world weeps, but the need is not relieved, the wrong is not righted, and the injustice is unredressed. He enforces the need of individual spiritual activity on those who listen to him, and every soul assents, but not one stirs itself to action. He summons to the work of God and man the numbers that hang upon his lips; but he might as well be crying in the wilderness for all the result that follows. And so,

with no power to stand alone, he is yet left alone and without a single active sympathiser. If then, at such seasons, such a man shrinks from the solitude and loneliness that a true and divine life and conduct must entail, is it strange that his thoughts take one direction, as did Balaam in the Old Testament, and his conduct another; that his outer life is shaped by the worldly customs he inwardly reprobates, and, because he cannot find a friend to be his companion on the narrow way, he is led to join those who have taken the broad way; that his life is wasted in weak compliances and habits of which he repents him in secret with ever more bitter but unavailing tears; that his will grows steadily weaker, and his supplications for peace breathe more and more of a passionate despair, as the vision of God fades out of sight?

And yet, my brethren, we had here the elements for the making of a noble character, if the man had but sought wholly in God the sympathy with his lofty purposes that he looked for in vain in his fellow man: if, staying himself, while he might, on the love of home and kindred and friends, he had with strong resolve left these behind at the summons of diviner claims, and gone forth on the path of obvious duty, alone, yet not alone, for with him there had been the presence and love, the shelter and strength, of God Himself.

But the dangers to which men of this class are exposed are not limited to minds of the highly-intellectual type; for there are times and seasons in the life of every man, when he must stand alone, or forfeit his higher nature: alone he must go into the wilderness, alone take the path of duty or truth, not only uncheered by friends or kinsfolk, but even with the voice of all men against him: alone he must face his trials, alone endure and overcome his agony. And alas only tribulation and anguish can be the lot of the man who cannot at such seasons declare with our Lord: "Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

We must face our temptations alone: the whole work of building up the Christian character is a work truly solitary—a work in which we can admit no man to a partnership in our responsibilities. The duty of true repentance, the suppression of unjustifiable wrath, wrong desires, and uncharitable thoughts, the conquest of evil habits, the ever-recurring struggle of submission and self-surrender, the ready confession of evil done, the preparation for coming strife, are tasks on which the human soul can safely enter with no presence but the presence of its God. Here the affection, even of those who know and love us best, may only prove a hindrance: their well-meant efforts may serve only to reconcile us to our self-indulgence, to cheat us of our sorrow, to lead us into a dangerous forbearance with our sins, to beguile us into pleasant thoughts about ourselves, when in the reality of things we should be lying in prostrate shame before our God. It were hard to meet the counsel of an affectionate friend with the reply "Get thee behind me, Satan," and yet we should act to ourselves in the spirit of these words, and sternly refuse to accept the message of "peace, peace," when for our divided hearts and double minds the only salvation lies in the irreconcilable war of the Spirit of God with the elements of sin within us. In like manner we should beware of thoughtlessly giving the same counsel to others; for thereby we may be quelling the rising unrest that the Spirit of God has waked within their souls that He may redeem them from their deadness in trespasses and sins. In all deep experiences of the soul, God alone can be with us: in Him we can find a strength to succour our weakness, an ear for our confessions, and a heart on which our anguish may hush itself to rest: our experience of life must be slight, if we have not yet learnt that there is no rest for the human heart save in God alone.

The secret of all true strength lies in being alone

with God. Why is our life so weak, so unworthy? Why have we so often reason to despise ourselves for our moral cowardice? Why is there such an unspiritual commonplaceness about our Christianity? Just because we give ourselves no leisure to be alone with God: because, living in the presence of no higher beings than ourselves, our souls reflect only the commonplace tone of the society we frequent: because, in the busy ways of men, in the whirl of social life, in our continuous absorption in business or pleasure, our souls have been shorn of their strength, and surrendered an easy prey to their spiritual foes; no wonder that we now fear the censure of men we despise more than the condemnation of the conscience we profess to reverence: no wonder that, through dread of the flippant sneer or the empty laugh, we withhold our witness against the profane jest, the heartless slander, or the unclean tale, and deny the Lord that hath redeemed us. Moral invertebrates that we are, how are we ever to become strong and grow up into fearlessness and truth? How are we to be delivered from the manifold petty slaveries, which we daily endure, and yet scorn ourselves for enduring? There is only one way, and that is for us to meet our God face to face; we must go into the wilderness; we must no longer shrink from standing alone in the presence of God, from having our sins exposed in the light of His holiness, and consumed in the fire of His love; this is the source of all true strength: he that stands in the secret presence of the Almighty cannot fear the presence of any man: and, if we would live a true life, we must have recourse to the solitude of this presence continually.

Mark how our Lord prepared for all great occasions in His life by spending the preceding night in prayer: how in Gethsemane He wrestled with strong crying and tears, but in the judgment hall on the morrow—His was the only unruffled soul in that great tragedy.

How the solitude of God's presence fills a man with might, and sends him forth, strong in the strength of a divine companionship, to undertake unpopular tasks in the home, in the social circle and in the Church, and do, with fearless quietude, things that all men evade or depreciate. And as he addresses himself to his life's work, or to each individual duty as it arises, how glorious beyond all imagining is the assurance God gives him " to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world," and, with that assurance of our Master ringing in his heart, how little he recks of high place or power, of the strife of jangling, ill-natured tongues, or the vexing voices that beset and try him.

My brethren, especially ye young men and women whose glory is in your strength, do you covet the best strength ? Go, then, into the wilderness, dare to be alone with God, cast your weakness on His Almightiness, and you will find that your dependence on His lovingkindness will make you independent of human opinion.

In conclusion. My words may now be reaching hearts that are on the eve of temptation, or in the midst of its fiery furnace. To such I would say : If you would come forth therefrom true and chosen servants of the Lord, cleansed from impurity and made fit agents for His will, take Christ's presence with you into the wilderness of temptation, shelter your weakness under His might : confess to Him all the awful experiences of that season when you cry " never was man tried as I am tried : " confess to Him the envenomed assaults of sin, your deep-felt weakness and defencelessness, and your resolve not to let Him go till He make you strong to overcome and crown the strife with victory. In the loneliness of your spiritual strife, take home to your tempted hearts these Old Testament words of strength and consolation—" When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall

not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee": and, above all, take this strong assurance of the Master Himself that comes to us in all the plenitude of His power: "Lo! I am with thee all the days—whether of joy or sorrow, success or failure—lo! I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the world."

THE PRAISE OF MEN

" Nevertheless, even of the rulers many believed on Him ; but because of the Pharisees they made no open profession, lest they should be put out of the Synagogue. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." *John* xii. 42, 43.

THE rulers here mentioned were members of the Sanhedrin or Supreme Council of the Jews. The Evangelist emphasises the fact that, even of the chief rulers, many believed on Christ, but that through moral cowardice they were afraid to make an open profession of their belief. These rulers were convinced intellectually, but they had not the courage of their convictions : they feared to give them expression in life. Creeds are of no value in themselves ; they are only valuable so far as they express a man's spiritual experiences, deeds, and convictions. Indeed, purely passive acceptance or purely passive retention of creeds, however admirable the creeds may be in themselves, tends to corrupt the moral and spiritual nature of man. Bishop Westcott in his Commentary on this passage (John xii. 42) goes so far as to affirm that " complete intellectual faith (or rather we should say " complete intellectual credulity ") unless it finds expression in life is really a climax of unbelief." And yet, to-day, stress is too often laid, not on the spiritual life, but on the intellectual acceptance of a creed, on participation in certain ritual observances, on the fulfilment of certain conventional good deeds, such as the fashionable piety of the time may dictate. The Jewish rulers feared the Pharisees, who were the orthodox party in Judaism : they dreaded expulsion from the synagogue ; for as the evangelist adds, " they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

Now our subject this afternoon is to enquire how the teaching of the text bears on our everyday life. We shall therefore study, as briefly as we may, wherein consists this love of the praise of men, and how far it is justifiable to allow it to act as a motive in our conduct.

The desire of praise, especially of those whom we respect, is a natural emotion in man, and most valuable when duly regulated. It is implanted in the individual for his well-being and that of his neighbours, just as the appetites of hunger and thirst are implanted in the individual with a view to the preservation of his physical life. But for the intensity of the pangs of hunger and thirst, numbers of people would not trouble themselves to procure food and drink.

The desire for praise is manifest in human beings, from infancy onwards, as well as in many of the lower animals. This desire of praise is an innocent and useful instrument for fashioning the early years of childhood and youth. It begins to operate upon the child before he attains the use of clear understanding or articulate speech, and on the youth while his moral principles are only in the early stages of growth. Judicious praise is invaluable at these periods and, indeed, at later periods. Thereby faults may be outgrown, or overcome by the virtues that run counter to them. But, to ensure these good ends, praise must not become insincere and degenerate into flattery. For insincere praise and flattery cannot fail to corrupt the man on whom they are bestowed. Praise is not only valueless, but hurtful, unless built upon truth. It is this fact that makes the early environment of a man a matter of supreme importance. Before our conscience has awaked to its tasks, and the sense of our responsibility to God alone has claimed its due supremacy, we are to an incredible degree influenced and shaped, for good or for evil, by the praise or dispraise of those that control and

surround us—our parents, pastors, masters, and friends. Hence the immeasurable importance of a good environment for childhood and youth. But, when once we have outgrown the condition of moral or intellectual minors, or, to use the legal term, of "infants," that is, persons who are incapable of forming an independent judgment, or of recognising and fulfilling their own religious and civil duties without guidance, we cannot make the opinions of others our ultimate standard of conduct, however close be the relation in which they stand to us, or however vast be the majorities, and pretentious the grounds, on which they base their claims. Private, as well as public, sentiment is often swayed in the direction of the higher ideals, but it is far more often shaped by mere expediency. To every changing wind of popular feeling the opportunist, whether he be a child or a politician, trims his sails, and often successfully, but to popular requirements the good man cannot conform. In the dictates of the enlightened conscience he finds a code which controls, not only his outward conduct, but also his appetites, affections, and ambitions, and which prescribes the limits of their just exercise. To win the praise of our fellows at the cost of conscience would be to subvert the eternal order of things, and to transfer the responsibility of the chief command from that which is highest in us to passions and instincts which we share in common with the beasts that perish.

And yet, a man touched with the Christian affections cannot be insensible to the good opinion of his fellow-men, or set at defiance the judgment of those with whom his life is closely connected. He will avoid the weakness of the really *vain* man, who cannot live without applause, and the arrogance of the *proud* man, who regards the approbation of his fellow men as a thing unnecessary to his comfort or satisfaction.

He may not so easily escape the danger that besets a third class of men, those who set too great store by the praise, not of men generally, but of the wise and good they have known. The desire of such praise is often of the greatest worth, but too often this desire is found, associated with a certain degree of self-distrust, with a vein of weakness, in men in whom the affections preponderate, but who lack willpower, and who, therefore, however great their intellectual vigour, do not like to stand alone. With a natural affinity and craving for the sympathy of others, they can ill endure the lack or loss of it. Though they do not attach importance to numbers, or to the indiscriminate suffrages of the mob, they long for the approval of the few they do revere. Should they win but this, they can face with fearlessness the scorn of the strong, and confront with untroubled heart the menaces of the many.

Truly the perils of the affectionate but weak heart are manifold. Those who depend on the sympathy of others must, if they are to fulfil their pilgrimage with faithfulness and joy, win emancipation from this weakness, and school themselves to a deeper trust in God: to lean gladly on the strength of friends while they may, but, when support is withheld, to advance, though they be wholly alone, on the path marked out for them by Christ: to avail themselves indeed of any shelter their high calling allows them, but, when no such shelter appears, to go forward none the less, though without the help or encouragement—apparently either of God or man. When such emergencies arise, the time of testing has come; for the life that is to develop its best must be thrown on rough conditions, and must from time to time pursue its path in complete isolation, if need be.

But we cannot confine our attention to this small class; we must take account of the vast bulk of

mankind who desire praise, who delight in approbation, and cannot withstand the allurements of popularity.

Most men are susceptible to praise, and many will extend to it a ready welcome, even when it is unwarranted, and of the grossest description. The desire of praise makes men covet popular favour, and labour to gain it, even at the cost of integrity and honour. They are ready to sacrifice even their own self-respect in order to win the applause of multitudes they cannot themselves respect. The appetite for such praise grows with its indulgence. Vast numbers of men and women spend their years in restless competition and childish struggles for the chief seat at the feast, for the higher place in the roll of wealth or fashion, for name and fame ; in short, in ceaseless anxieties, that wear out the spirit, and overcast the splendours of their present opportunities by the shadows of their vain ambitions. Even wise and good men, in their moments of weakness are willing to accept praise, though they are conscious that they possess no claim to its bestowal. How terribly the undue love of praise undermines the conscience and corrupts the heart ! Surely there is ample reason for our use of the words in our litany : " From all blindness of heart, from pride, vainglory and hypocrisy, Good Lord, deliver us."

Since nearly all men are subject to the dangers of praise, all men should be especially careful as to the circle to which they look for it. But it is a fact of universal experience that those who crave for praise most are the least fastidious as to the source from which it comes. It is almost impossible to account for the extravagant value that many leaders in Church and State set on the approbation of the motley and miscellaneous multitudes, who are vastly their inferiors, intellectually and morally. Of what avail is it to count heads when their owners possess neither loftiness of character, nor trained judgment,

nor knowledge of the questions at issue, nor sound principle itself ?

Forgetting that it is their first duty to follow their own convictions, many of our public men seem to take it for granted that it is their chief obligation to satisfy some body of opinion other than their own. Hence the only question they appear to ask themselves is this : shall we lend ourselves to the passing enthusiasms of the multitude, and adopt the popular panaceas for ecclesiastical and national ills ? or shall we court the suffrages of a selecter and more distant audience, which will give its verdict when the foolish clamours of the present nobodies are reduced to silence, and there remain only the calm and august judgments of the good and wise ?

It is nobler, of course, to appeal from the clamant voices of the present to the calm and sifted wisdom of far distant times, to court a lasting fame rather than the passing acclamations of the hour, but it would be infinitely nobler to brush aside all desire for praise, whether in the present or in the coming time, and, in simple obedience to honest conviction, to serve one's day and generation, seeking no reward, coveting no crown, and looking for nothing save the approval of a good conscience—in other words, the praise of God.

Men of strong and influential character, as well as rulers in Church and State, are inevitably exposed to grave moral perils through the praise or flattery of their associates or subordinates. In fact it is difficult, or almost impossible, for men in high places to learn the real truth at all. Having at their command, generally the sympathies of their real friends, and always the interested help of their self-seeking subordinates, they are unable to draw from either the judgment of an independent mind. It is the inevitable price that high gifts and high offices entail in a world where truth has so often to give place to mere sympathy or self-interest. In courts

and cabinets, in religious and political coalitions, truth and independence are too often at a discount, when flattery and sycophancy are the means by which the unprincipled and morally indifferent reach the goal of their desires.

But, since few, if any, of us are leaders in thought or action, fitted to command the applause of listening senates, or to read our history in a nation's eyes, we have to ask what lesson the words of Christ have for us, whose duties do not extend beyond the daily round and common task? Now, however circumscribed our lot may be, we have each a certain circle of friends or admirers. To desire their approbation is natural, but there are two dangers in so doing. The one originates with our friends, the other with ourselves.

As regards the first, most of us have friends who are lavish and indiscriminate in their praise. The praise of friends who betray an entire lack of discrimination we come in due course to discount and set aside as valueless, but the praise of sympathetic hearts which are also endowed with judgment is fraught with real danger. Loyalty and appreciation are good things in our friends, when their judgments are guided by high principle, but, if they are lacking in principle, their praise can hardly fail to be injurious. When we are weak or erring, such friends are often too ready to soothe us with soft words, or by casuistical arguments to reconcile us to the unworthiness of which we are in greater or lesser measure conscious. But those who have repeatedly ministered to our weakness have forfeited the right of fostering our strength. Hence, when we *are* in the right, we can derive no moral countenance from those who were ready to support us when we were in the wrong. It is in the closest intimacies of life that we are confronted with this temptation. Sometimes our friends are blinded by a natural partiality; sometimes they sacrifice principle for the sake of peace, or

use soft words through fear of giving pain. Hence, unless our friends are true, their praise and criticism alike are a weakness to us rather than a strength.

The second danger lies in ourselves. The love of praise, the desire for approbation, becomes, if converted into a leading motive of conduct, the most demoralising and corrupting of all the affections within us. It demoralises and corrupts our nature; for it puts the praise of men into the place of the very excellence for which alone the praise itself is due: the rewards of virtue into the place of the virtues themselves. But love and admiration, praise and a good name, if they are justly to become our own, cannot be taken by force; if they are to become rightly ours, it will be because they spontaneously follow us, and they will do so all the more inevitably, if we act independently of them, in fact, if we act as if they did not exist at all. They are amongst the secondary good things that will be added unto us, if we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. But so long as secondary good things are made the objects of our chief desire, neither the Kingdom of God, nor the secondary good things that follow on its possession, can ever become our heritage.

Hear then the conclusion of the whole matter. We must first of all seek the praise of God, and if at the same time we can preserve the sympathies of our fellow-men, we shall all the better discharge the tasks that God has assigned us. The sympathy of our fellow-men, though it should never be the prime motive of our action, is often necessary to the effectiveness of our efforts. For, in the first place, if a moral sympathy is established between us and those with whom we have to do, then all our powers of will and intellect will work more spontaneously and joyously in themselves; and, in the next, these powers will render better service to our neighbours, and influence more effectually their springs of conduct and character. The love of kindred and friends

and the admiration of those who know us only by report are good so long as they further us in the narrow way of truth and righteousness; the praise of the world is inspiring and helpful, so long, and only so long, as it is a reflex of the praise of God. But when their influence would divert us from the narrow path, we may no longer lean thereon or avail ourselves of their help, but, leaving them all behind, must press onward and upward into the clouds and darkness that beset the narrow way the Master has bidden us take, fearing not its solitude, its terrors, or its storms.

And in so doing we shall not only serve God, but we shall also best serve our brethren; for in seeking our brethren's good, and not their love and praise, we shall help them, not for our own sakes but for theirs, not for our own advantage but solely for their own highest well-being.

THE ATROPHY OF UNUSED POWERS

" Take therefore the talent from him." *Matt.* xxv. 28.

WE are all, my brethren, endowed with various talents and capacities, and our health bodily and spiritual depends on our right use of them. We have talents of the body, such as strength, endurance, swiftness, gracefulness, and the like. We have talents of the mind and spirit, such as judgment, observation, memory, imagination, feeling, will, and the higher powers of conscience, and the capacity for communion with God as His children.

Now the most perfect man is he who keeps all his God-given capacities in use, and enlarges them by use. But few men in fact do so; most men give themselves more to the exercise of this talent than of that, and neglect one class of talents for the sake of another. We might roughly divide men into three classes from this standpoint.

The first class use only the lowest talents committed to them. All they want is food and amusement—they want nothing better or higher now or in the coming years; and the more a man gives himself to such a view, the more he loses the power of loving anything better than living simply as a mere animal from day to day. If his bread is certain, and his drink assured, and the wherewithal to clothe himself attainable, such a man is content. And he thinks further that all the world needs to cure its evils is more bread and more recreation. The man is blind to everything above his brutish views: he has lost his higher capacities by disuse. Moreover, the mere untrained wage-earner never gets much of the bread

he thinks so highly of, the bread for which he sacrifices his higher talents.

Now let us consider the second class, the brain-workers. Such men undoubtedly get much out of the world. They get not only the higher intellectual things, but the bread that the first class valued so highly that it sought for nothing else.

But this second class has its limitations. It is blind to the higher talents which fit them for heroism, for saintliness, for communion with God, and so they gain their earthly ends by losing all these.

Now let us take the third class—those who seek to use their highest God-given capacities aright. Such men generally make the best use of the lower talents also; those who have done most for this world have not been those who have neglected their spiritual capacities, and said, "Let us live for this world, and do all we can for this world, but let the hereafter take care of itself." No, such people as these have hindered the world's welfare. For by whose efforts have the great social reforms been brought about? In every case by the religious men of the time acting on some religious principle.

Infirmaries for the body have owed their origin to pity for the soul: schools for the letter have been opened that free play might be given to the spirit: sanitary laws enacted, that religious life might become possible by the deliverance of men from their foul surroundings. Who would have lifted a voice for the slave that thought of him only as a debased human being? or who would have built a reformatory for the culprit child, if he saw nothing beyond the slouching gait and the evil eye? The most august structures of the world have been reared in the service of faith: the noblest charities, the finest results of learning, the best institutions of law and justice, every greatest thing the world has ever seen represents the fruitfulness of the religious talents.

Just as the body works best when under the guidance of the trained intellect, so the intellect works best when under the guidance of the Spirit of God.

The religious talents, those which fit us for communion with God, are the greatest. How is it with us, my brethren, in regard to these ?

We have already remarked that these talents are lost by disuse, or by the overgrowth of the lower talents.

Now all living members whether of body or mind require use or exercise. Without it they cannot develop, and they are like to die. The unused muscle gradually dwindles and disappears ; there is no need to come and remove it ; want of use removes it. Fish which live in underground waters lose their sight wholly. So it is in the spiritual world. The unused talent dies. Hence you see some old people absolutely callous. The time was when they had at least a capacity for believing in divine things and choosing God as their God, when they felt the reality of God and things unseen as they cannot now by the utmost effort, when prayer and worship were spiritual facts such as they are not now.

The capacities for loving and serving God, the capacities for a true spiritual life, are all but taken from them. And how few are aware of this possibility, of this tremendous fact ! That they are really dwarfing their whole nature : that they are steadily and inevitably destroying their souls, and losing the divinest talents of their natures—they do not dream for a moment of such a catastrophe. On the contrary, they often imagine they are getting above religion, growing too competent and wise to be any longer subjected to its authority, or inconvenienced by its claims. They think themselves wiser now than in the past, and that it is the evidence of religion that is weaker. They do not see or suspect that this very fact is evidence itself that the process of loss is

far advanced, that they are close on the brink of being men who for this world have lost their souls: they do not understand that the talent that is unused is withdrawn: that the spiritual capacities given them for communion with God are taken from them.

Neglect your daily morning and evening prayer—your communion with God—and you will soon come to feel it an irksome task. This is the first sign that you are losing your capacity for prayer.

Give up family prayer, cease your attendance at public worship, at Holy Communion—and what will the result be? Simply this, you will lose all desire for these, and, later, you will lose the very power and capacity for prayer and worship. Finally, you will feel no need whatever of them. That is the last stage. God's judgment has already been executed—"Take the talent from him."

It is a terrible thing my brethren that this judgment "take the talent from him" is being executed every day before our eyes. An English poet writes thus sadly

> "I remember, I remember
> The fir trees dark and high;
> I used to think their slender tops
> Were close against the sky.
> It was a childish ignorance,
> But now it's little joy
> To know I'm farther off from heaven
> Than when I was a boy."

Yes, if we do not faithfully use the talent, it will be taken, gradually but irrevocably, from us; and do not let us imagine that by really intending at some future time to turn to God we can escape such a calamity—that calamity has already befallen us, so far as this world goes. If we are now stammering in prayer, the likelihood is that we shall soon be dumb, unable to pray.

If good works and deeds of self-denial are more a

burden to us than they were, let us beware lest the best we can produce is only fit for the axe and the fire. If our communings with God become more and more irksome, forced, time after time, to yield to lower claims, we may feel assured that the talent is being taken from us, and if we would be in the way of salvation, *now is the time*, now the accepted time, to strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to perish. As the cramped and numbed arm warns and wakens the sleeper, may the hardness that comes over the spirit awaken us, while yet there is time, to chafe the dying powers to life.

Let no one comfort himself in the activity of his mind on the subject of religion. That is one of the things to be dreaded. To be always thinking and debating about the great questions of religion without using the spiritual talents committed to us of God is just the way to lose the talents most rapidly, and to close up the mind in spiritual darkness. This is not the way to know God. God is known only by them that receive Him into their faith, their love, their deep want—known only as He is enshrined within us, cleansing our hearts from their wrong and uncharitable feelings, and bringing all our aims and thoughts into captivity to His love.

My brethren, our subject is one of judgment ; if we be faithful, we must apply it in all its severity to our lives and hearts. In a matter of such vast and infinite concern it would not be right to speak smooth things, to prophesy—i.e., to preach, deceits. " Judge yourselves, that ye be not judged." Do not let any of us urge : my talent is small : it matters not whether I use my spiritual influence or not : whether I am dealing honestly in my business, acting unselfishly at home : it matters not how I use the small means committed to my charge. So, no doubt, argued the man of the parable, and the end of that man was " Cast ye the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness."

My brethren, through the tender mercy of our God, and through our faithfulness in this our day of grace, may we so use the talents committed to us here, that in the after world we may be greeted with the words: "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful in a few things: I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD

" And when even was come, the lord of the vineyard said unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. And when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more ; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they received it, they murmured against the householder, saying, These last have spent but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat. But he answered and said to one of them, Friend, I do thee no wrong ; didst not thou agree with me for a penny ? Take up that which is thine, and go thy way. . . . So the last shall be first and the first last." *Matt.* xx. 8–14, 16.

THE Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard is one of no little difficulty.

It is only found in St. Matthew and, if it is here given in its right context, its difficulties will no doubt disappear if studied in connection with its context.

From its context we learn the circumstances out of which the parable sprang. It arose out of, and was an answer to, Peter's question : " Lo, we have left all and followed thee : What then shall we have ? "

But as the parable sprang from Peter's question, so Peter's question was itself due to an earlier incident. At the close of the nineteenth chapter, the apostles had just witnessed the great refusal made by the rich young man, who, when compelled to choose between his wealth and Christ, clung to his wealth. And yet this young man had come running to Christ, and, bending the knee in token of reverence, had professed his readiness to do anything the young Prophet bade him, in order that he might have eternal life. Peter and the rest of the apostles must have

been deeply affected by this interview, and have looked with pity and sorrow on the young ruler, when, self-condemned in heart and with downward look, he withdrew from the presence of their Master. For a time silence naturally fell on the troubled group of disciples, a silence that was at last broken by the comment of Christ: "Verily, I say unto you, It is hard for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." These words, that should have made even the best among the disciples reconsider the motives with which he sought to enter the kingdom, only served to call forth from Peter an expression of intense and undisguised self-conceit. Instituting a comparison between himself and the young ruler, Peter remembers with great self-satisfaction and self-complacency his own sacrifices, and considerately acknowledges a like devotion on the part of his fellow disciples. "Lo," he declares, "we have left all and followed thee. What then shall we have?"

To this question of Peter our Lord gives a twofold reply. (i) All who labour in the kingdom will most surely be rewarded; (ii) But the reward will depend on the motive of the labourer. The first of these is expressed in Christ's words as follows (to quote Mark x. 29, 30): "Verily, I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold *now in this time,* houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

Now let us deal briefly with this first reply of Christ to Peter. Here Christ declares that he who surrenders earthly affections, or earthly goods, for the sake of God and man will receive, not merely an equivalent, but the very things he has surrendered, and these raised a hundredfold in value, and that he shall not have to wait for this return till the next life,

but shall have it "now in this time." The significant words attached to this promise, "with persecutions,"[1] point to the fact that no true life can be free from stress and sacrifice, from pain and conflict. But the promise abides unshaken; we shall get back manifold more than all that we have surrendered, and even the same kinds of good we have surrendered, though no doubt purified and in a higher form. This is another form of the truth taught by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you"; and again in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs *is*"—that is, theirs is even now—"the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are the meek; for they *shall* inherit the earth." Ultimately the true and faithful shall inherit the earth. This second truth is very far from being realised as yet, but in God's own time it will be as fully realised as it can be in this life. Sooner or later everything is given to him whose chief desire is to do God's will. In fact, nothing can be withheld from him. He alone is good, he alone is free, whom nothing can turn aside from the path of rectitude. He who does right in scorn of consequence, will be justified to the full before men and angels. To be disinterestedly good is to be divinely strong: the universe is at the feet of the men it cannot tempt. In the words of the Apocalypse "they shall reign—they shall be as kings—for ever and ever."

The promise of Christ shows that what we need is not the destruction of our various interests in life, but the ennobling of these interests, not the extinction of our natural affections, but their transformation by the Spirit of God. Suffering and sacrifice are indispensable for our spiritual development; yet suffering and self-sacrifice are not ends, but only means. If self-mortification and asceticism were

[1] In Mark x. 30.

the last word of our religion, it would be nothing better than an abominable superstition. But these are not ends at all. Christ declares to His disciples that the object of His coming is that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly.

And, here in St. Matthew, Christ promises not merely that we shall enjoy a blessed immortality, but that into all the ties, natural and spiritual, that bind us to our fellow-men, a new life and a new spirit will be infused, and that all our rightful affections, all our justifiable admirations and ideals, will be given back to us, raised to a higher spiritual power, and ennobled and enriched a hundredfold.

An English poet has enshrined a partial form of this truth in two unforgettable lines :

> " I could not love thee, dear, so much
> Loved I not honour more."

His devotion to honour has deepened and enriched his love indefinitely. Hence the love, the friendship, the quest of truth, the ambition, that are being brought wholly into subjection to the love of God in Christ, can never suffer degradation or eclipse, but must inevitably be transformed into things that are priceless and eternal.

So much for our Lord's first answer to Peter's question—which is, in short, that all true labourers in Christ's Kingdom will be rewarded. But, as we have remarked, Christ gives a second answer to Peter's question and this answer is directed not to his question, but to the spirit that inspired his question. And the second answer begins with the words " But many shall be last that are first, and first that are last." The " but " with which this sentence begins does not confirm the promise just made by Christ, but qualifies it. We might expand the thought of the words in this wise. What I have told you is quite true. All men who have served Me and My cause will be rewarded an hundredfold, but the reward will

depend on the motive which led to the service. "Many that are first shall be last." The term "first" here does not indicate those who are first in point of time, but rather those who are first in the sense of being the most notable, or who have incurred the largest personal sacrifices, or done the greatest amount of work, professedly in the cause of God and man. But it is not the quantity of work that is done, but the quality—in other words, it is the motive and spirit with which the work is done, that count in the Kingdom. Work done for the sake of reward is not acknowledged in the Kingdom of God; nor, in fact, can that Kingdom acknowledge any work done in the spirit that prompted Peter's question, "What then shall we have?"

Our Lord, having thus definitely stated "Many shall be first that are last," i.e., that many that are first and greatest in the amount of service shall be last before God, proceeds to enforce this truth in the parable that follows.

The parable begins thus: "For the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard." Now that the labourers should make a definite contract as to the amount of their wage is a perfectly businesslike and justifiable proceeding, and, if this story were being told for its own sake, and for no other and higher end, no objection whatever could be taken to this contract. But a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The earthly story is therefore told in order to express some heavenly or spiritual truth. No earthly story, however, can adequately illustrate the laws and principles that govern the spiritual life. It can, at the best, only partially represent the spirit of that life, while, in some respects, it may grievously misrepresent it. Sometimes there are characters in the earthly

story which stand for others in the heavenly, but only do so in the way of contrast—as, for instance, in the parable of the Unjust Judge, the Unjust Judge in the earthly story stands, but only in a sort of figure, for God in the heavenly. In the parable of the Lord of the Vineyard, the Lord acts in a very different way from that of an ordinary owner of a vineyard. His motives are really affected by those of the Divine Being he is chosen to represent.

The definite terms on which the first labourers undertook to work are right in themselves, but the fact that the later bands of labourers made no bargain of any kind, but trusted to the householder's word that he would give them that which was equitable, suggests that there is a special significance attaching to, and a special emphasis laid on, the bargain made by the first body of labourers. Their attitude recalls that of Peter, when he said " What then shall we have ? " and it prepares us for the wrong spirit that is revealed at the close of the story.

But, to pursue the parable, we read that the householder " went out about the third hour and saw others standing in the market-place idle ; and to them he said : Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you." And " again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour and did likewise." And, finally, going out at the eleventh hour, he found others idle in the market-place, " and he saith unto them : Why stand ye here all the day idle ? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard."

Now, so far, there is nothing unusual in the conduct of the lord of the vineyard. He acts just as any other owner of a vineyard would have done, in Palestine or elsewhere, who was eager to make the most of his vineyard. His frequent visits to the market-place from dawn to sunset show how earnestly he was bent

on securing the best returns possible. Hence he hired all the labourers he could find, from the first to the eleventh hour of the day.

But, when the hour for the payment of the labourers arrives, the labourers soon discover that the lord of the vineyard is a very unusual person. The men that were hired at the eleventh hour received to their astonishment and joy every man a penny, as those that were hired at the third, and sixth, and ninth hours. When those who were hired first came forward, they naturally supposed that they should receive more. But they likewise received every man a penny. And so their day's work closes in bitter discontent, to which they give outward expression in the complaint "These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat."

Clearly the lord of the vineyard appears, at this stage of the story, to be a very eccentric person. Here the influence of the heavenly meaning of the story has begun to show itself and reshape the earthly story. For the lord of the vineyard pays his labourers, not so much for work, as for goodwill. He thought more of one hour's work done by the men last hired, than of the twelve hours' work done by the men that had been first hired—a thing wholly unnatural in human affairs. Moreover, it was clearly contrary to the opinion that the labourers themselves had naturally formed of his character; for had not the lord of the vineyard with unwearying zeal sought from the dawn of day to its close for labourers to work in his vineyard, and so led them to believe that his main concern was not with the labourers themselves, but with the large returns he hoped to secure from their labour in his vineyard? Here it must be admitted that the discontent of the labourers first hired appears perfectly reasonable. The lord of the vineyard was not like any employer of labour they had ever known. And the reason, as

we have already seen, is that the heavenly meaning behind the story has here reacted on the story, and changed essentially the conduct and spirit of its leading agent. The attitude of the lord of the vineyard to his labourers is so transformed in the earthly story as to represent the attitude of God to His own servants. We have here Heaven's transvaluation of earthly values, that is, the valuation that Heaven sets on earthly values. In Christ's Kingdom one hour's work, done in the right spirit, is worth more than twelve hours of mercenary labour, or, rather, it is invaluable in comparison with such mercenary labour; for, in Christ's Kingdom, the labour of the hireling is really valueless. The one hour's work is a real contribution to the bringing in of the Kingdom of God: the twelve hours count as nothing towards it. Furthermore, mercenary servants of God naturally conceive that God is concerned, not first and foremost with His servants, but first and foremost with the service they render Him, and particularly with *the amount of that service*. This conception represents God as being just as greedy for what He can get as the meanest human hireling. This is man's universal, and all but ineradicable, misrepresentation of God in every religion. It is found, too, in every branch of the Christian Church.

Now the parable condemns such a view as a complete misconception of God. God's chief concern is for His servants themselves, and not for the service they render. Our Lord's aim is to transform us spiritually, so that we may work in the same spirit in which He Himself works, in the same spirit in which God Himself works.

If it is our chief desire to serve in this spirit, then all life, all art, all literature, all science, and all service of whatever kind, will become the means Christ uses, not for getting so much out of us, but for begetting a new and higher life in us, so that we may realise in ourselves the true nature of His kingdom,

its faith and adventurousness, its truth and purity, its hopefulness and chivalry, its love and joy.

It is thus that Christ answers the wrong spirit underlying Peter's question "What then shall we have?"

Possibly—nay, rather, probably—we all begin to serve God in a self-seeking spirit, but, unless, as we go forward, this spirit is transformed, our work will be vitiated, and be unfitted to receive any recognition or part in the Kingdom of God, seeing that, in reality, it is done, not for God, but for ourselves.

The magnitude of the work we do matters nothing from our own standpoint; for we are unfit to judge its worth. We may bear all the burden and the scorching heat of the day, and do many wonderful works. We may bestow all our goods in charity, or give up our body to self-denial and self-torture like St. Simeon Stylites, and yet, because we do all these things from the wrong motive, they are of no account in the Kingdom of God.

Hence our Lord closes this parable with the same words with which he had introduced it, "So the last shall be first and the first last."

JACOB AND ESAU

"And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy first-born, Esau. And Isaac . . . said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it to me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? . . . And when Esau heard these words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing. And he said, Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and behold, now he hath taken away my blessing." *Gen.* xxvii. 30–36.

THIS afternoon I propose to put before you the characters of Jacob and Esau, the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah, and some of the lessons we have this day to learn from them. The chapters which record their history are based upon two sources of the ninth century B.C. There are other additions of a later date. But into these critical questions I shall not enter here. It is enough for our present purpose that Jacob's biography with all its disagreeable traits comes from his own countrymen, and that the Jews accepted this biography of the founder of their nation.

To begin. We observe first of all that, though Isaac and Rebekah had no doubt a high reputation amongst their contemporaries, this reputation judged from the modern standpoint cannot be justified. In the course of nearly 4,000 years the human race has made some progress, at least in the West, and, if we judge Isaac and Rebekah by our present Western standards, we should declare that their two boys

were handicapped from the outset both by their heredity and their environment. The narrative clearly represents Isaac as a weak, though well-meaning, man, and Rebekah as a very unscrupulous woman when the interests of Jacob were at stake. Both parents were partial to their children and both spoilt their respective favourites. "Isaac," we read, "loved Esau, and Rebekah loved Jacob." Both parents showed their partiality openly, and this favouritism naturally vitiated their children's character. In short, this oriental household was divided into two factions. It is not unnatural that this unjustifiable, if not criminal, conduct of the parents issued later in the enmity of their children.

Jacob was a schemer from his childhood—cool, crafty, and far-reaching. He had studied his brother Esau's character, and used the knowledge so acquired to entrap and get the better of him. He recognised that a present advantage or comfort was everything with Esau, and that, for an immediate self-indulgence, he would be ready to sacrifice the most valuable of his future prospects. So Jacob bided his time, and waited the fitting opportunity. In due course this comes, and Esau returns one day, famished with hunger, from one of his hunting expeditions. Notwithstanding all his efforts, the strong and adventurous hunter had failed wholly in his quest of prey, and returned, depressed, hungry, and faint from lack of food. As he reaches his father's tent, he is greeted by the savoury smell of Jacob's pottage and naturally asks his brother for a portion. But, in a most unbrotherly spirit, Jacob refuses save on certain conditions; without scruple he takes advantage of Esau's evil plight, and requires him to promise to surrender his birthright for a mess of pottage. Assured that Esau will speedily repent him of his promise, he withholds the pottage till Esau has taken a solemn oath to keep his word.

This incident over, some years pass before the

brothers reappear in the narrative. Again Jacob exhibits the same perverted character, but in a far graver form. At his mother's prompting and with her help, he robs Esau of his father's blessing. To do so, he first takes advantage of his father's blindness and personates Esau, and, next, he overcomes his father's rising suspicion as to his identity by a series of equivocations and lies. It is true that Jacob objected at first to Rebekah's proposal, but his scruples were due to the fear of detection, not to any reluctance to do a shameful deed. But Rebekah soon succeeded in removing Jacob's apprehensions. She was no doubt accustomed to cajole her weak husband by flattery, to hoodwink and deceive him with ingenious lying, and she had apparently become so habituated to deceit, that she had ceased to attach any importance to its consequences. Hence, when Jacob expresses the fear that his father may discover the deception and curse instead of blessing him, Rebekah, with complete insouciance, declares, " Upon me be thy curse, my son : only obey my voice." Whereupon without further concern, Jacob follows his mother's counsels, and secures the blessing that his father had intended for Esau.

But Jacob had hardly left the presence of his father, when Esau returned from hunting. In due course, having prepared a savoury dish such as his father loved, Esau brought it to his father and besought him to arise and eat of his son's venison, and bless him before he died. Thereupon Isaac trembled exceedingly, and told his son that Jacob had impersonated him, and robbed him of his blessing. And then we read that, when Esau heard these words of his father, he " cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry and said, Bless me, even me O my father. . . . Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me ?—And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given unto him for servants."

In patriarchal times, the birthright carried with it temporal and spiritual privileges. The temporal privileges consisted in lordship over the rest of the family and the clan: the spiritual consisted in the right of succession to the priestly office and, in this particular family, to the spiritual blessings which had been promised to its founders. We shall learn presently that Esau discredited and despised the spiritual blessings. It is on this ground that he is called, in the New Testament, a profane person; that is, one who despises things spiritual in comparison with things material. But to this point we shall return later. In the meantime Esau's mind is set on the temporal advantages which he has lost. As regards these he feels assured that on his father's death he can retrieve them by the might of his own right hand. He had no doubt as to his power of crushing the mean and scheming Jacob, and he openly expressed his intention of doing so. Thereupon Jacob, at his mother's bidding, flees from his home, and seeks refuge with Laban, his mother's brother.

Now, on the way to Laban, Jacob had a vision and "behold a ladder was set up on the earth and the top of it reached to Heaven, and behold the angels of God ascended and descended on it." And in the vision God appeared to him and renewed the promises made to his forefathers.

At this point of the narrative my hearers might well ask, was Jacob a person deserving of God's singular favour under such circumstances, and was this a fit occasion for showing him a crowning grace? But such a question seems to misapprehend the purpose of the vision. The vision was given—not to reward some special merit on Jacob's part, but to awake his sleeping conscience, and to make him aware in some degree, if that were possible, of the goodness, the mercy, and the truth, that he had consistently profaned and outraged, apparently

without any consciousness of his wrongdoing therein. Can anything be more natural, my brethren, than that, after the commission of some heinous sin, the ideals we have outraged should present themselves before us, and bring home to us some consciousness of the wrongs we have wrought? When a man has been guilty of craven cowardice and falsehood, would he regard it as a special favour from God to be obliged to witness deeds of courage and truth and heroism? When a man has soiled his soul with impurity, is the vision of lost chastity an ignoring of his guilt? When a man has given loose reins to his vanity or pride, can the thought of manly reticence, modesty, and self-forgetfulness be aught else than a discipline of pain?

Accordingly we find that when Jacob awakes from his sleep, he is not soothed and comforted by the Divine vision accorded to him, but filled with unrest and fear. Even the worst men cannot at times close their ears to the voice of conscience, or their eyes to the vision of duty. Jacob discovers for the moment that he cannot escape the consequences of his sin by fleeing from the scene of its commission. Hence he cries out: "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven." Now, at this period, Jacob had no desire for a nearer acquaintance either with God's house, or with the gate of Heaven; for his selfishness was too deeply rooted to yield to the vision of that night. Its appeal was too spiritual. Jacob must encounter far more terrible experiences before he could be transformed and receive the new name Israel—the warrior of God. Thus the ladder reaching from earth to Heaven and the spiritual appeal of the vision vanish into nothingness with the rising sun, save in one respect. When the night with its terrors has passed away, Jacob is his old bad self again, and so he characteristically resolves to turn the vision to his own advantage, and vows a vow which is one of the

grossest instances of selfishness in religious literature. It is essentially a shameful bargain he seeks to make with God. He promises to give God one sheep out of every ten that God gives him, if God gives him flocks of sheep. He will at *some future day* live a better life, if God will prosper him and bring him safely back to his father's house.

Jacob is the type of a man who tries to serve two masters. He wants to be religious, if religion will advance his selfish aims; but with his selfish aims he cannot part. Every religion abounds in Jacobs, who conduct their business and their religion by methods that even the most utter worldling would scorn to use. But true religion is not answerable for this degradation of human character. Such men are not selfish because they are religious; they assume the cloak of religion in order the better to secure their own selfish ends.

So Jacob resumed his journey to the home of Laban his mother's brother, and, when once established there, he begins anew his predatory incursions on the possessions of his next nearest relative, who had opened his house to him, and helped him in his hour of need, and for several years he went on systematically robbing his uncle Laban of his flocks, while Laban resorted on his part to equally questionable methods in order to hold his own with Jacob. It was a duel between two rogues. But Laban had no chance of success in such an unequal strife. Jacob was a past master in the delicate art of getting the better of his neighbour, and of doing so with a clear and approving conscience. Accordingly, when at last Laban's sons directly charged Jacob with robbing their father of his flocks, Jacob rounded upon them, and maintained that he, and not Laban, had been the victim of organised fraud, and furthermore claimed the direct countenance and help of God in carrying out his dishonest devices, declaring in set terms that "God had taken away their cattle and

given them to him," though he was fully aware that it was by his superior knavery that he had got hold of his uncle's possessions.

There are many more derelictions from the path of courage and honour and honesty ascribed to Jacob, but the above are sufficient to illustrate his character.

But, since Jacob achieved a great name, and founded the most remarkable of all the races of mankind, he must have had qualities other and better than those already indicated.

What then were the qualities that marked off Jacob from his twin brother Esau, and formed the foundation of a mighty future for himself and his descendants? These qualities need no lengthy description. They constituted the very essence of Jacob's character, and consisted in his power to form plans for the future, and to subordinate to their achievement the claims and pleasures of the present: in his power to confront difficulties and never-ending disappointments, and begin the struggle afresh: to see all his plans overthrown, and yet ever with a wondrous fertility of resource and patient endurance to resume the struggle to realise his far-reaching ambitions. Jacob, through all his reverses and successes, shows a tenacity of purpose, an indomitable force of will. Deliberately and steadily he moves on to the goal he has set before him. In short, the distinctive and essential feature in Jacob's character is his resolute sacrifice of present to future gain, of the immediate pleasure of the moment to the far off fruit of years of steadfast purpose and strong endeavour. However enticing may be the lure of an immediate indulgence, its power is for Jacob paled by the splendour and promise of the greater things just breaking on the far horizon.

There is hope for such a character; for all that men of Jacob's type need is the transformation of their ideals, the substitution of a divine end—the Kingdom of God and His righteousness—for an end

that is merely earthly, however splendid. Transmute the far-reaching, but merely earthly and selfish, aims of a Jacob, and he will become an Israel—one through whom the true aims of God will ultimately be achieved. There is no possibility of forming a great man, or a great nation, without this characteristic that Jacob had. The man and the nation, who are mere opportunists, and are living only for the immediate present, whose main aim is to have a good time of it here and now, and who therefore shirk difficulties, and break their most solemn covenants, when their observance entails loss and sacrifice, must, unless they change essentially, ultimately suffer shipwreck and be annihilated.

I have dwelt at some length on Jacob, but we cannot omit all consideration of Esau. Esau impresses us as the bold, generous, man of the world. He is frank and impulsive, impetuous and passionate; and his qualities appeal to the instinctive sympathies of the human heart, just as those of his crafty, scheming and selfpossessed brother stir up our instinctive antipathies. But Esau has still finer qualities. He is devoted to his aged father; and years after, when at last it was in his power to crush the brother that had robbed him of the most treasured possessions of an oriental chieftain, he relinquished his long-cherished purpose of revenge when his brother sued for mercy: nay more, he forgave him wholly, greeted him with fraternal affection, and treated him with a chivalry all but incredible. Why then, my younger hearers might reasonably ask, was such a man as Jacob chosen to be the founder of the elect nation, and why was such a man as Esau rejected?

The answer is not difficult. Esau was unfitted to be the founder of a great family or of a great nation, because, however charming he was in other respects, his main characteristic was inconstancy and instability. He was everything by turns, and nothing

long : he was lacking in depth of character : he was a man of short-sighted aims. Hence, absorbed in the present and regardless of the future, he recklessly sacrificed the high prerogative of his birthright. Such men cannot establish families trained in the virtues of self-control, wisdom, and piety, nor help forward the true interests of the nation and of mankind, when, as in the present day, we are standing between two worlds—the one dying, the other struggling to be born. Thus Esau's inconstancy and fecklessness, his sensuality and lack of principle, rendered useless the other charming qualities he possessed, whereas Jacob's unflinching purpose and resolute sacrifice of the present to the future, when once purged from selfishness and consecrated to divine ends, steadily transformed his character, and turned to lasting good the powers that in his earlier years he had used only to his infamy and shame.

Esau stands forevermore as the type of those who are resolved on having a good time of it without considering what it may cost them, and accordingly are ready to barter away the heritage of a lifetime for the gratification of a natural appetite, or the indulgence of some petty vanity, malice, or revenge. Where can we find a family circle that is not to-day engaged in screening the delinquencies or the shame of some one of its members, who, for a mess of pottage, has sold his truth or honour, his self-control or good name ? It is, alas, one of the commonest events in everyday life—this selling of the birthright and selling it, invariably, for nought. And the tragedy of such lives is all the deeper, seeing that these Esaus are generally, in the days of their youth, the most charming members of the family circles to which they belong. But, however brightly their early years may glow with the gifts of youth—with its manifold charm and ingenuousness, with its joyousness and adventurousness, these Esaus, unless they are converted and

spiritually transformed, are inevitably doomed to close their days in darkness and despair.

The Esaus are all around us. They are of many types. Sometimes they are the Micawbers, who are indolently waiting for something to turn up, or the "Ca'Cannies" whose main occupation is killing time, and who live on the thrift and foresight of their neighbours, or they are men in quest of a soft option, seeking for a place where they will work a minimum of hours and earn a maximum of wage, or not work at all.

But let us not close on this tragic note. Let us think rather of the wonder of God's mercy and lovingkindness, which can transform both the scheming, knavish, Jacobs and the indolent, self-indulgent, Esaus of humanity, into true men of God, if they have but the will to become so, and hearken to the Divine summons, "My son, give Me thine heart." And since God's mercy can work such transformations, then there is hope for all of us who long to become God's children. If we are conscious of our own deep unworthiness, if we are conscious of the plague of our own hearts, then we can go to the Master with the full assurance that He can, and will, do for us above all that we can ask or think, even above all that He promises in His wondrous invitation to the sons of men, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

PRAYER

" In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." *Phil.* iv. 6.

PRAYER is a necessity of the spiritual life. Our nature is framed for utterance, for communion, for the interchange of thought with thought, of love with love, and the well-being, nay, the continued existence, of our higher life, is based on such communion with God. Where no such communion exists, our spiritual nature must gravitate downwards, religion must languish, the capacity for prayer be lost by disuse, and our life, shorn at last of its spiritual splendours, be drawn down into the stagnation of a godless existence.

Prayer is as needful for the student as for the practical man. It will save the one from falling into a vague idealism; it will save the other from losing touch with the spiritual world, and becoming the mere servant of expediency, and the slave of materialism.

Prayer will remind the man of thought that truth is given, not merely to enlighten the mind, but to guide and regenerate the whole life of man; prayer will never suffer the man of action to forget that his work is of abiding worth only in so far as it expresses the truth which is above him.

Prayer is necessary to every true life, and, since every man has been placed by God in a twofold relation, as an individual and as a member of a community, and since, on the one hand, no man can realise aright his personal life, unless he bears a true part in the life of the community, nor, on the other hand, be true to the community, unless he is first of all faithful in his personal life, the man

who is striving to be true in both relations will give himself to private and to public prayer. No life can attain its best that omits either.

It is obvious that prayer as a function of our personal as well as of our public life must have its fixed times in private and in public. But even independently of this fact, prayer cannot be left to become the mere creature of our changing moods, a thing dependent on our inclinations or disinclinations; in fact, we need prayer most, and can least of all dispense with it, when we feel our need of it least.

For, if we feel no need of prayer and so abstain from it, we are for the time atrophying the spiritual side of our being. This is a state of mind full of the deadliest peril.

But, to descend more into detail, let us ask what is the object of prayer, what are its conditions, and what is the chief service rendered to us by prayer?

Now, as to the object of prayer, the object of prayer is not, as the heathen conceived it, and as many debased forms of Christianity still conceive it, to alter God's will and to bend God's will to ours, but *to bring our will into harmony with God's will.* God has a plan for every man's life, a plan noble and divine and outreaching in splendour our loftiest hopes and imaginations, but that plan can be fulfilled only by the shaping of our life according to His will.

And for the due shaping of our life we need a constant supply of spiritual and temporal gifts. For spiritual gifts we pray to the Father unconditionally and without any reservation: we pray for likeness to Himself, for forgiveness, for purity, for truth, for patience and self-mastery, for openness to every good influence, for love going forth in sacrifice, and thought ripening in character. And we know that, if we ask these spiritual blessings, we shall receive them; for they are God's will for us at all times, and personal communion with Him is the direct channel through which they flow to us.

Herein we learn to use rightly the phrase "in Christ's name." Christ is the way for us to the Father. And His name is for us not merely a musical cadence wherewith to end a prayer. Nay, to ask in Christ's name is to ask in the spirit of Christ. This is clear from our Lord's words in John xiv. 14, Revised Version: "If ye shall ask me anything in my name, I will do it." Prayers, then, closing with the words "for Christ's sake," but wholly at variance with Christ's spirit, cannot be prayers in His name. But for all spiritual blessings which we ask in Christ's name we can pray with the assurance that it is our Lord's will that they should be ours.

As for temporal blessings, we can pray for these also, but conditionally: we must always ask them subject to God's will. We cannot indeed doubt for a moment God's willingness to bless us therein, if we are fit to be blessed; but He alone knows whether particular external blessings are good for us or not. But of this we are assured that, if such blessings are withheld from us, they are withheld only because we are better without them.

Accordingly, to all our prayers for things temporal we attach, as our Lord did, the words of trustful submission: "nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

From the object of prayer we pass naturally to its conditions, and the first condition is earnestness.

When once we recognise prayer as a necessary function in our individual and social life, we must be in earnest, alike in our thought, and in our action consequent on our thought, else prayer, whether private or public, will become an empty ceremony, a mere commemoration of what God was to us or others in the past, instead of a living communion in the present, a lifeless monument of bygone realities, a sort of religious rehearsal, in which we act before our fellow-men, but somehow hope to be paid for

our acting by our Father in Heaven. How many of us are praying for what we really do not want, or even think of, as we use the high and solemn words of supplication? How many of us are attending divine service for the sake of example to others, and extending the patronage of our presence to the worship of the Most High? How many of us are simply fulfilling a task—a repetition of so many prayers, confessions, thanksgivings? All such attendance at public worship for the sake of example to others is based on false pretences. We all need God, need Him unutterably, more than we know, or ever shall know here, and our presence at public worship should be at least an outward confession of this our need.

Let us, therefore, my brethren, be in earnest, as befits us, not only in the expression of our desires to God, but also in the active effort to secure their fulfilment. For, if we are half-hearted therein, our faithlessness of spirit will not confine its paralysing influence to ourselves, but will hurt other souls around, and, on the other hand, if we are in earnest, the earnestness of our worship and life will help other hearts to a higher communion with God.

The object of prayer being then, as we have seen, the fulfilment of God's will, to the fulfilment of such prayer no uncertainty, our Lord assures us, can attach, if we are but in earnest. "Ask and ye shall receive: seek and ye shall find: knock and it shall be opened unto you." Here, we shall remark, the prayer that God grants must be the expression of our chief desire—that is, the desire that is backed by our whole personality, not merely one of the crowd of lesser desires competing for our allegiance.

If the wish for a divine life is to be fulfilled, it must be the chief wish of the heart, and, if it is the chief, its satisfaction is certain—nay, it is inevitable. "Seek and ye shall find." But no promise is held out to the divided heart, or to disjointed requests,

uttered once in a way, and alien to the customary habits and tone of life.

There is some truth in the statement that we must needs love the highest when we see it, but then this compulsion does not necessarily lead to effort. Moreover, if that highest is a rebuke to our present thought and action, most of us are too apt to turn our back on the vision that disturbs our self-content. Some, indeed, do strive to retain the vision, but do nothing more than admire the goodness that is above them; and, since they are not willing to pay the cost for its attainment, that goodness never becomes theirs. Earnestness, therefore, is the first requirement of true prayer.

Hence, if we fail to become true, if we fail to become pure, if we fail to become perfectly honest in our dealings with our neighbour, if we fail to overcome our besetments, our distractions, our vanities, and resentments: if, in short, we fail to become in some measure Christlike, it is because it is not our chief desire to become so.

But earnestness is not the only condition.

There are some people nowadays who believe in no personal God, and yet give themselves to prayer because they believe that praying exercises a beneficial reflex influence upon them. But prayer is not an attempt of the mind to operate upon itself by expressing the thoughts, and simulating the desires, of devotion; it is not an effort to cleanse and uplift ourselves through self-knowledge, through unsparing confession, or the agonies of repentance. All such experiences are not prayer; they may render it effective service, but they cannot in themselves deliver us from the sense of alienation from God's presence: they cannot soothe our sorrows, lift our hearts into peace, and endow them with calm restfulness and imperishable resolve.

Hence the second condition of true prayer is—that we must not address ourselves to the empty air, or to

some illusion of our own making. Prayer, in its essence, is the direct and personal communion of the spirit of man with God—a communion as real as the daily intercourse of a man with his fellow-man, but infinitely closer, possessing evidence as certain, and exercising an influence as assured.

> Speak to Him thou for He hears,
> And spirit with spirit may meet,
> Closer is He than breathing
> And nigher than hands and feet.

In this communion we meet face to face with our Lord, and over the tumult of our distractions, over our self-loathing and self-abasement, the bitter consciousness of repeated failure, and the longings after holiness, He breathes the benediction of His forgiveness and His peace, and enfolds us in the lifegiving, strength-giving, consciousness of His presence. In such worship words may, or may not, be spoken, yet therein our sins are swept away, our anguish is laid to rest, our hearts quickened with fresh life and strength and love, and our spirits filled with the peace that passeth man's understanding.

Such, then, being the nature of prayer, it is our duty not to engage in it heedlessly. Prayer requires a reverence of approach, a disengagement as far as possible from turbulent disquietudes, a solemnisation of spirit, a consciousness of the great Presence before whom we kneel. Our prayers of course cannot be confined to fixed occasions in private or in public. The spirit of true prayer can be exercised at all times, and under all circumstances. It is a veritable communion of man's spirit with the Divine. Hence we must guard against the habit of merely *saying* our prayers. For many prayers are addressed to a Being of whom we have no distinct conception at the moment; they do not express the deepest thoughts of the heart, but owe their utterance to a formal sense of duty,

or the mere constraint of daily custom. Such saying of our prayers without the attempt to realise the immediate Presence of God falls short of the essence of prayer. What measure of blessing God may attach to such prayers we cannot decide; it is manifest, however, that they must fail to attain the beatitude of communion, with the unmeasurable growth and strengthening of the Spirit that follow thereon.

Now that we have dealt with the object and conditions of prayer, it remains to consider the service which prayer renders to those that truly engage in it.

By prayer our God becomes more and more to us an ever present Personal Reality. This is the first and greatest service, from which all the others flow. And if we would measure in some degree the gains of such fellowship, we have only to consider what we gain from communion with men whom we reverence and love.

Almost without being aware of it, we are raised into the atmosphere in which they live and move, and become therein capable of our best and highest. For though, in their company, we are deeply conscious of our failings, we find, nevertheless, with a surprised delight, that we are capable of higher things than we imagined, and can rise into sympathy with thoughts and feelings beyond the ordinary range of our aspirations.

How immeasurably more must this be the case when our communion is not with man, but with the living God, the source and sustainer of all excellence and all truth? In this communion our hearts come consciously under His immediate influence, and are thereby opened to receive His inspirations; for it is never a man's task to supply himself with divine ideals and inspirations, but only to render an earnest obedience to those that God supplies. For it is God Himself that gives the vision of holiness, and the repentant sorrow, that suggests the high thought and

the unselfish purpose, that inspires the merciful act, and kindles the generous feeling, that wakes the hunger for righteousness, and the spiritual thirst that only He can satisfy.

It is ours to work out in life the inspirations that in such high communion our God works in us; for inspirations of truth and mercy, of love and righteousness, are likewise calls to practical duties; duties which, in our lower moods, wholly failed to appeal to us, but which, in the clearer vision of His Presence, are recognised and undertaken as tasks of God's own setting.

Again, communion with our God brings to light our weakness and infirmities, our cowardice of spirit and half-heartedness of devotion, our shrinkings from the cross our Lord has laid upon us; and yet, if we continue instant in prayer, if, despite our natural reluctance and fears and self-distrust, we still present ourselves as ready for His completed will, then our weakness will be swept away by the inflowing tides of His Almightiness, and our hearts that, in the presence of some stern call of sacrifice, sobbed forth to God their fears and anguish will prove calm and unruffled when the moment for self-sacrifice arrives.

"We kneel, how weak! we rise how full of power!
Why therefore should we do ourselves this wrong
Or others—that we are not always strong,
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy, and strength, and courage, are with Thee!"

Our fears and weaknesses, our discontents and infirmities, can manifest themselves safely in communion with God, and in communion with God alone, and not with human beings who may be infinitely less worthy than ourselves; for in such communion, and in it alone, can fear and frailty be transformed

into divine courage and strength and steadfastness.

In the face then of every danger, in the forecast of every crisis in life, before we go where temptation assails, and evils lie in wait, let us, through communion with God, be delivered from the treacherous elements within us, let us acquire in prayer the inward power we shall need in the strife of coming action. For there alone can we attain to the spirit—not of occasional, but of *sustained*, self-sacrifice, there alone can we take up the cross, however grievous, and there alone enter on the path of sorrows, though it be with wounded and with bleeding feet.

In conclusion, and herein I am speaking to men and women who are often or at all times beset with infirmities bringing in their train sin and humiliation ; for we all have our infirmities and sins, whether sins of temper or vanity, sins of untruthfulness or impurity, sins of sensuousness, covetousness, or self-indulgence, and, this being so, I would ask, do we wish to continue the slaves of our sins, and to entail upon ourselves a deepening bondage, growing in horror and hopelessness with the growing years, or do we long for deliverance, and desire to be set free ? It lies with ourselves to determine. No man is excluded from God's Kingdom of the divinely good and free, save the man who excludes himself. Our deepening bondage is our own doing. If we would be free, we must will in the power of Christ to become so, will, I do not say now and again, or on isolated occasions, but will, as our chief and crowning desire. And if this is our chief desire, God will grant us deliverance, Christ will set us free.

But, though it may not as yet be our chief desire to become Christ's freemen and Christ's friends, yet, despite our half-heartedness, it may be a persistent longing of our souls to become so ; let us go then, go to the Master in prayer. Let us set forth to Him the war of passions within us, our divided hearts, our sad disloyalties, and pray for deliverance from the

yoke of sin, for purity of motive and the presence of His own Spirit in our hearts, for strength of will. And if we faint not, despite repeated daily failure : if we be but steadfast in prayer, and in ever renewed and faithful effort, He that is gracious beyond our desires and our deservings, will, in due time, give us above all that we can ask or think.

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